

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Religious Plays

By Robert H. Bunting

It has been popular to dramatize biblical events. Movies have been made on Bible subjects. Moses and the Messiah have been used as subjects for drama. Some have been sympathetic treatments — others have been blasphemous. All have been additions to God’s biblical account. Everything from passion plays to George Burns playing God on the screen have been presented. “Jesus Christ Super Star” gave a perverted view of the Savior and was attacked by preachers. At the close of the year, denominations across the land give skits on the birth of Jesus. Recently churches of Christ have followed the practice with skits and plays on Bible subjects.

I am convinced dramatization does not correctly convey God’s truth. Good-intentioned brethren have promoted something that of necessity adds to the word of God. For example, if one were to dramatize Genesis 11:31-12:3, there would have to be additions to God’s description. Could one produce such a skit without conversation? What conversation between Abram and Sarah would be inserted in the play? How would one give a skit on the subject without guessing more than God revealed?

We should not promote a religious skit or play for they necessitate our being definite where God is indefinite. If a play on the birth of Christ is produced, how many wise men will be on the stage? A definite number must be present. The Bible, however, is indefinite on the number of wise men. How will you picture Jesus in your Passion Play? In the past fifteen hundred years, Jesus has been pictured as effeminate or as quite manly. In the sixties he was a “hippy.” He has been blond, dark, or auburn haired. He has no beard, a short beard, or a long beard. The Bible does not define the physical appearance of Jesus. Isaiah 53:2 is as close as the Bible comes in giving a physical description. Christ’s appearance is not emphasized, but his words and deeds are. In a play the appearance of Jesus is definite. Should we do more than God in presenting the physical appearance of Jesus, the Messiah? Does God’s warning about adding to the word apply to the appearance and acts of Jesus, or only to his sayings (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Jn. 9)? Remember, it was revealed things that belonged to Israel and their children (Deut. 29:29).

We should not promote religious skits and plays, for they necessitate going beyond God’s word. A Passion play is an example. Catholic tradition has Jesus falling under the cross three times. In fact, this is a part of the Catholic Stations of the Cross. From what I understand, Passion Plays follow this tradition, and this is why a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, is shown carrying the cross. Matthew 27 records the act of Simon, but where does the Bible record Jesus falling? Where does the Bible tell us of a conversation between Mary Magdalene and Roman soldiers? A play cannot be produced without adding to God’s revelation.

We should not promote skits and plays, for these are forms of entertainment. How many, who have not read the Book, will flock to see a movie about the exodus out of Egypt? Why the crowd? It is entertainment. God’s truth is not designed to be humorous or entertaining. A movie or play draws a crowd for its entertainment value. What a shame people do not see the value of God’s book! Do we cry in a movie, but are completely unmoved when a brother reads John 15:17-30 at the Lord’s supper? Why are we moved by a human production, but find no emotional reaction reading or meditating on God’s lovely word? God’s word is not entertaining. It is instructive. *“Ye have not so learned Christ: if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus”* (Eph. 4:21, 21).

We should not promote religious skits and plays, for God tells us the Scriptures were read, taught, and preached in the Lord’s assembly (Col. 4:16; 1 Tim. 4:13; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Tim. 4:1-5). The New Testament knows nothing of skits or plays put on by the church. Saints were not edified by going to a religious play

in their community.

Skits and plays are defended along these lines: God used drama in the Old Testament. Ezekiel dramatized the fall of Jerusalem and the scattering of Judah (Ezek. 4:1-5:17). Therefore, God approves drama as a teaching method. I recognize Ezekiel and others used dramatics to convey a message. However, Ezekiel was a spirit-guided man. These dramatics were inspired by God. God wrote and directed the events in Ezekiel. This is not parallel to a play written and directed by uninspired men. In fact, religious plays promoted by men of the world are produced and directed by those disobedient to God. This is nothing like Ezekiel 4.

The death of Christ was shameful, cruel, and hours long. Read the Bible accounts, and be impressed with the reality. He was **“smitten of God”** (Isa. 53:4). The purpose was **“for our transgressions”** (Isa. 53:4, 5). Two others suffered the same death as Jesus. Their pain and death were real. Their suffering was for a just reason (Lk. 23:40, 41). Although they suffered **“the same condemnation”** as Jesus, there was a difference. Jesus’ death was unique in that He allowed what could have been divinely stopped (Jn. 10:18; Matt. 26:53). He is the Son of God without sin (Mk. 14:61, 62; 1 Pet. 2:22). Christ **“by the grace of God tasted death for every man”** (Heb. 2:9). How can a man acting on the stage accurately show God’s love and God’s cost in the cross? This cannot be mimicked. Through the word we **“know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge”** (Eph. 3:19).

God said, **“And he bearing his cross went into a place called the place of the skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha; where they crucified him, and two others with him, one on either side and Jesus in the midst”** (Jn. 19:17, 18). A Passion play takes two hours to say something similar. How is it done without adding to the word of God?

Skip the play. Read the book. – *Truth Magazine*, May 6, 2004, pp. 10, 11. ■

Three Kinds of Christians

By Greg Gwin

There are three kinds of Christians in any local congregation. Which kind are you?

1) There are those Christians you can always count on. When there is work to be done, when a volunteer is needed, when a need must be met, you can depend on these folks to step forward. They carry their own weight, and they help others carry theirs, too (Gal. 6:2, 5). There is never a doubt about their commitment or dedication. Their obvious zeal serves as a positive source of encouragement to others. You just never are left to wonder where they stand – because they demonstrate their faith in every way. These Christians serve as the “core” of any faithful congregation. Without them, important work would never get done – crucial matters would be left unattended – the church simply would not do well. Thank God for all such brethren. May their tribe increase!

2) There are some other Christians in the church that are absolutely “out of it.” They have little if any connection to the real work of the local congregation. They never are around if there is work to be done, and they simply DO NOT volunteer to help with the on-going efforts of the group. It is even impossible to count on these folks to attend the services regularly. Almost anything can serve as an excuse for them to miss the assemblies. And, observing their spotty attendance, others are left to wonder if they are really doing any profitable work in service to the Lord.

3) There is yet another group that is in evidence in the local church. These are the ones who are “riding the fence.” They want to give the impression that they are faithful and involved, but in reality their lives are full of compromise. They vocally claim allegiance to Christ, but they can’t be counted on to consistently put the kingdom first. Our Lord described these three kinds of Christians as **“hot,” “cold,”** and **“lukewarm”** (Rev. 3:15, 16). Which term describes YOU? — *Collegvue church of Christ Bulletin*, January 18, 2015. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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