

What Is the Gospel?

Installment #3 — How Do We Get There?

After my son read the first two installments he wrote me back the following response:

“Sounds good, Now that I think about it I guess it all seems obvious to me, except how we go about getting there. Haven’t people wanted this very thing since the beginning? What is your idea of what we need to do differently?”

My Response:

I think that what we need to do is to basically proclaim the transformation or metamorphosis more. I think the thing that we need to do to get to where this Gospel proclaims we should be is to do what Jesus said, “If any one would follow me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” The Gospel that we commonly hear preached centers around us, and our need for redemption not God’s need or desire for a “counterpart” or “Bride”. The Gospel that he preached told us that we had to die on the cross along with him so that he could raise us up as a new species. Today’s Gospel provides for our blessing and prosperity but speaks little of the fellowship of his sufferings, or coming to an end of our lives. While we retain that mystical aspect about us that makes us us, the motivating and driving decision making force in us should be his life.

Like Jesus said his works or words were not his own. I certainly don’t have all the answers, but there is a growing hunger and cry in my life that doesn’t want to continue on with business as usual. If Jesus came to create a new race of beings then I do not want to remain just a slightly better version of what I was. I wish I could wave a magic wand and see the revelation become a reality in my life. I am ashamed at how familiar I have become with the truth without actually fleshing it out. I heard someone say that familiarity often breeds contempt, and in a way that is true. We hear terms like born again so often that pretty soon they lose their meaning and impact. I think that a key to getting there is to first admit that we are not there and then to wait on God in faith and in expectation for what only he can do.

Jesus performed the miracle of changing water into wine in the beginning of his public ministry and the Scripture says that his disciples put their faith in him. As I understand it that’s what it takes to be saved. Yet they still had a lot of issues like betrayal and denial. Then after his resurrection he breathed on them in the upper room and said to them, “receive the Holy Spirit.” As far as I know he didn’t fail and they received the Holy Spirit yet they still hid in fear of reprisal from the Jews and Romans. Then he commanded them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Promise of the Father. He said that as a result of this encounter they would receive

power and that they would become his witnesses. Well the word for power is what we get our English word for dynamite from and the word for witness is the Greek word Martos that we get our English word Martyr from. Most of us know what that is. What ever happened after that encounter with the Promise of the Father changed them forever. Their love and devotion to Christ was so intensified that history records that they seemed to be gripped by some holy madness. They did all the same miracles he did and these men, without the Internet, Television, Cable or any other type of ad campaign turned the world upside down. And at the end of their lives their love, honor and devotion to Jesus only burned hotter and brighter as did their love for each other and the lost. Peter begged his executioners to crucify him upside down because he felt he was not worthy to die in the same manner as his precious Jesus did. Honestly, my heart does not burn with love for the church, the lost or Jesus in any measure close to theirs and I wonder what is wrong with this picture — it should, but selfishness and self indulgent self-centeredness still thrives in my life. Only rarely from time to time do I get a glimpse of what it should be like.

I know that I want what these men received and I don't believe I can get it from any study course, conference or tape series. I have actually been used by God to heal the blind and raise a man from the dead, but so did his disciples before their lives were changed forever. I am not certain what is going on in my life or in the lives of so many others that are saying, "I can no longer settle for anything less than what Jesus came to do to us!" I am certain that it is not just meant for us to lay around drunk in his Spirit, acting giddy and then the next day return to our same old life styles seldom even thinking of him in the course of the day. Don't get me wrong it is great to be in the "manifested" presence of God and it truly has an intoxicating effect on you, but I don't want to stop short and have that become the pursuit of my life. If I do, what has changed? My life is still all about me when it should be all about him. He came to clothe himself with flesh and blood 2000 years ago and he still wants to clothe himself in our humanity today. May God have mercy on this generation and once again send us the Promise of the Father that will change us forever into that new species of beings that never before existed until he came! Just for the sake of clarification I absolutely believe that the Promise is the person of Jesus Christ expressed in the person of the Holy Spirit.