

July 1, 2012

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS or A ONE MAN CAST OF CHARACTERS

Dear Friends & Family,

(6/13) I'm about 10 days away from leaving for my first of six camps this summer: four in PA, one in NY, & one in NH. So much needs to be done before each of these adventures: recruiting staff, praying in campers, preparing sermons & accompanying Time Machine dramas, compiling & editing Time Machine drama sound-tracks (very time consuming), packing & loading costumes, props, & other various & sundry equipment and by far, the most pressing burden to be before the Lord & His Word as much as possible. For this first camp, which I shall have already returned from by the time you read this, I plan to portray four different biblical characters: one of King Herod's cavalymen (on horseback, of course!), Abraham on Monday night out of the Time Machine for my son-in-law Nathans sermon that night, Barabbas out of the Time Machine for my own sermon on Wednesday night, then John the Baptist out on the field for my annual Directors Skit. Barabbas literally gets beaten up by two Roman jailors [I have told various men in my travels in the past who had the task of punching me, I'd rather have it hurt & look realistic, than have you hold back & it look cheesy. Needless to say, they made it look realistic, to the point of my ribs being bruised years ago by a brother who did it in OH!]. Then, for the field drama, John the Baptist gets jumped by a bunch of Herod's jailors, many of whom he throws off, before the big guys bring him down, shackle him, & bring him to face King Herod & Herodias. Playing in roles like these is one of the many reasons I try to workout several times each week, not to mention the rigors of the ministry, & how I do it. I'm also growing my hair out for The Baptist.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Someone happened to ask me a year or so ago why I didn't do contemporary dramas. At the time, I told them I was so profoundly impacted by Bible-epic movies, that I had little desire to do contemporary stuff. However, upon further reflection months later, I realized that the Scriptures exhort us to learn from & be warned by the peoples in the past recorded in the Scripture (Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:6) In fact, the first means that I re-member that the Father used to start drawing me to Jesus was the movie The 10 Commandments. I was sit-ting in a movie theater in South Jersey with my five siblings & seven of my cousins, who were visiting from Missouri. I was dumbfounded by what I saw. I want to recollect that my siblings & cousins were bored & wanted to leave, but I remember being mesmerized. Little did I know how much I would grow to admire & emulate Charlton Heston! J

THE KING OF ZEAL

Speaking of biblical characters I've portrayed, this past Sunday I once again endeavored to re-enact King Josiah's heart-rending reaction when Hilkiah the high priest discovered the lost Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord. In preparing for this message, which I have given many times, re: high places, once again, I was flabbergasted at what Israel was doing in the precincts of the Lords temple & in His courtyard. I kept saying to myself the words of Shaphan the scribe to King Josiah in II Chr. 34: The Book of the Law has been found in the temple of the Lord. Like, where else would it be? That's where it was supposed to be! And yet it was found. When something is found, it usually implies that hitherto that time, it was lost. How could it be lost in the temple? It had either been deliberately hidden by the evil King Ahaz or Manasseh, or, worse yet, it was lost among the clutter of idols that were erected & strewn all over the temple precincts, including the inner court! This was the one locale on the entire surface of the earth, 24,000 miles in circumference, where the Lord & Creator of the universe had chosen to reveal, manifest, & display the greatest amount of His glory His Shekinah, as it has been called. Yet there were altars erected to Baal & Asherah poles in the holy place the place where the Lord had chosen to have His

Name dwell forever. There were male prostitute living quarters inside the temple! Idolatry of every kind infiltrated Gods holy dwelling place. Today, we might be apt to think, or even say, those stupid, blind, ignorant Israelites! What were they thinking?! Were they insane?! How could they even think to do such a thing?! Not so fast, Beloved not so fast. One famous Reformer said the human heart is an idol-factory. Who is the Lords temple now? Yes His people. You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, & strength. I've yet to meet the person who has done so. Neither have you. Whatever part of us is not doing so? It is giving itself to another. These significant others in our lives? They take up our time, our energy, our thoughts, our focus, our affections, our attention, & oftentimes our money. And, in a very real way, like the Israelites of old, we can pass our children thru the fires of our idols. We give ourselves to them, but oftentimes our children suffer the repercussions of our infidelity to our very, very Jealous God. Who is this God we serve? How can it be that He would be so affectionate toward us that, like a faithful Husband, His heart burns with jealousy over us when we give our affections to another lover? (II Cor. 11:2,3).

GODS FIREMAN

Just as Paul was given a small dose of the Lords jealousy over His people, so King Josiah was filled with the Lords jealous zeal. His name means Fire of God & it was certainly on display through this tenderhearted man, who was smitten by the word of the Lord when it was read to him by Shaphan the scribe. The Chronicler records that Josiah tore down, smashed, ground to powder, cut down, broke down, etc... the idols in the temple, in Jerusalem, & in the surrounding territories, so great was his zeal for the honor of the Lord of Hosts. We must not overlook the fact, though, that the zeal Josiah displayed was the Lords Own! I've often said, God's jealousy is our security. In Deuteronomy the Lord told Israel, that of all of the nations of the earth, upon you alone have I set My affection. Oh, what blessed verse! Grasp it, Beloved! The same applies to us, His New Covenant people! On us alone, He has set His special affection! Oh, for the grace to return it to Him!

HOW THE MIGHTY HAVE FALLEN

(6/30)I returned home late last night from my first of six camps. This was our debut in our newly restructured camp program. We enlarged our camps from two to three this summer. In doing so, we upped the grade/age limit of Sr. High Camp. We had decided almost 20 years ago to cut the age down to 16, as we mostly had nothing but problems with the older campers. Now, we ventured to try it again. For the most part, our camps have been relatively smooth, as the majority of the campers have grown up with us, beginning as jr. campers, then progressing to teen camp. They have been groomed to flow with the program & to anticipate & enjoy long periods of time in the Lords presence. Last week, however, we not only had older campers, but rookie ones at that, with several from the inner city. I immediately sensed that their shields were up, as many exuded hard-ness, arrogance, cocky attitudes, & coldness. One even confessed at the end of the week that he deliberately tried to sleep during evening chapel. I have to be honest I had my doubts. Early in the week, I regretted our decision last winter to go to three camps, & include older campers again. I even told a couple of people that if I had to make a decision right now, that I would go back to our two-camp setup as before. However, as the week progressed & these young men encountered our first line of offense, i.e. the love & friendship of the counselors, I began to see a miraculous change. As they sat under the hammer & fire of the Word of God night after night, & found themselves immersed in His thick & glorious presence, one by one, they began to fall. Tears, broken-ness, & repentance came, as they were humbled before the Lord of the whole earth. It was an amazing sight to behold. I wept as I tried to talk to one of the hardest whose testimony at the end of the week was one of the most powerful I've ever heard in my 44 camps there! Beloved, this is why I keep going back year after year. Kim & I thank you for reading this, for praying for us, & for helping us to continue this work, if you feel so led.

Sincerely, Michael

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*[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship □ itinerant □ home missionary & is also licensed to preach the gospel by the local church he attends, Immanuel Church. Caboose! is also an affiliate ministry of the Hope-well Net-work of Churches. For 14 years he served on various local church staffs full-time. Since 2000, he & Kim have lived by faith, having no salary, retirement, or health insurance—yet this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both visual aids & drama, to all age groups either separately or combined, as the Lord opens doors. To help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485].

*Ministry/events for JULY & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

June 15: Concordville, PA: hnc teen camp directors mtg.

June 21: Medford, NJ: Local EF pastors breakfast//mtg.

July 3: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: hnc board mtg.//pastors □ mtg.

July 5: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: Pulse young adults group: preaching

July 11-14: Good Shepherd Church, Reamstown, PA: Kids Camp: preaching

July 14-20: Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA: Hopewell Network Jr. High Camp: pastoral director

July 22-27: Friends of the Cross Christian Church, Corning, NY: Camp Victory: morning chapel speaker

July 27: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Cox/Forsberg wedding: attendee

July 31: Head to Windsor, New Hampshire: Camp Gilead evening speaker the last half of that week

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