

November 1, 2009 "All Saints Day"

**"WEDDING BELL 'BLUES' → TURNED INTO A 'GOLDEN' OPPORTUNITY"**

Dear Friends & Family,

(10/4) It has only been a few days since I sent out last month's newsletter, but I wanted to write you re: another eventful experience while it was still "fresh" in my heart & mind. Many of you will recall October's topic, the recent passing of my mother. The very next weekend after being at her funeral in FL, Kim & I attended the wedding of one of our nephews in VA. I considered it a blessing to my father to have this family event so soon after the passing of his wife of 58 years. Dad has always loved being around lots of people. I may get "some of that" in me from him! All of my siblings were there this time as well, plus many other family members. "Why so eventful, Michael?" Well, a justice of the peace was performing the ceremony, but I was asked to speak. My nephew professed to me last year to be walking with the Lord, but his fiance, to the best of my assessment from my nephew's own words, was not a Christian. Of course, God's word is clear re: this. I feared that my attendance at the wedding, much less speaking, would convey that I approved of it. This was touchy, as it was a major family event, although my first & foremost loyalty is to our Lord. I wanted to be there for my nephew's mother, one of my dear sisters & also a faithful sister in the Lord. There is victory in an abundance of counselors, so I sent a copy of the email re: my response to my nephew to my pastor & three other venerable men of God. Their advice & "editing" of my email was helpful. I then sent it to my nephew, who did not respond to any of my concerns, but he & his fiance still wanted me to speak! Hence, my brothers said to take it as a golden opportunity to preach the gospel, which I did. I had had a general idea what I wanted to share in the service, but the Sunday morning of the ceremony, I felt the Lord changing it somewhat. I separated myself in the house where we were staying, & "hit the floor". My oldest sister, also very dear to me, told me there would be many unsaved attendants at the wedding, including many young couples. I also learned at least one Muslim would be there, who happened to be in the wedding party. Hence, the pressure was on. One of my mentors mentioned above told me it's not about me, but Him! He's so right, but oh, how very difficult it is to get "me" out of *everything* I do! To my deepest regret, I truly doubt there is ever a time when I minister that this is not the case! Most pastors would envy this opportunity, as how often is it that any of them preach to an audience where the majority of them are not believers? The other challenge when preaching at weddings, is that you are not primarily there to preach "the gospel", but share things related to the event at hand. When my nephew & his fiancé asked me to speak, they requested that I do so re: "love & marriage". Well, is there any more pertinent topic/Subject re: this than Jesus?

**"THE MOMENT OF 'TRUTH'"**

I was seated on the front row with Kim on my right & my dad on my left. I was trying to stay focused & find the heart of the Lord. I tried to pray in the Spirit but didn't do very well! When I was called up, almost immediately I sensed the Lord's anointing, authority, & boldness come upon me. I was deeply grateful & amazed. I took the hands of the bride & groom in mine, & preached in between them. I spoke of Jesus' "groom-ship", as He is THE GROOM par excellence' above all. I saw three things about Him in relatively recent study, preaching, & teaching that awed me. The first, was that I had recited since a very young boy in Mass, The Apostles' Creed, a line of which says, "He will come again in glory to judge the living & the dead". "Michael, what in the world does this have to do with a wedding?!" I would have asked the same question, until I saw the week before the ceremony that one of the many "tasks" Jesus will perform when He returns to destroy death, conquer all of His enemies, establish His eternal Kingdom, etc., is to "deal with those" who are afflicting His people (II Thes.1:6). And, what is a very prominent theme re: the identity of His people surrounding His return? That would be, His "Bride"! He doesn't like it when His enemies "mess with His 'Woman'", & I say that very reverently. He will deal out retribution to them.

He is a protective & “Jealous” Husband, His very Name being so (Ex.34:14). I then charged my nephew in the presence of all to protect his bride. Secondly, when Jesus returns, one of the major events concomitant with “the Blessed Hope” is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev.19:9). You will recall that the night before Jesus was crucified, He got up from the table at the Last Supper, & proceeded to wash His disciples’ feet. This was the same One Whom they had witnessed firsthand raising the dead, healing the sick, cleansing lepers, instilling terror in demons as they saw Him approach, calming the violent storms & waves so frequent on the Sea of Galilee, etc...now, here He was, getting up to wash the filth of Jerusalem’s streets off the feet of His loved ones. Peter’s response was similar to the one he exuded years earlier when he first met Jesus, when the Lord sovereignly called fish to this discouraged & doubting disciple’s nets. “Get away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” When one truly understands their inherent depravity & God’s freely bestowed grace in the face of it, this is the warranted response. Now, Peter felt his deep unworthiness again, as the Altogether Lovely One came to wash his feet. “Lord, You shall *never* wash *my* feet!” “Peter”, Jesus replied, “If I don’t wash your feet, you can have no part of Me.” Peter couldn’t stand for that. “Not my feet only, Lord, by my hands & head as well!”. **“OBJECT LESSONS AT A WEDDING? YES!”**

I then shared with the audience the three object lessons I brought with me. Well, actually, I used “five”, as the bride & groom were my primary object lessons! The next thing Jesus did for His Bride-To-Be was “wash” her. Unless He washes us, our participation in the innumerable company of believers that constitutes His Bride is impossible. Required dress at this Heavenly Banquet is a pristine white robe, symbolizing Jesus’ perfect righteousness to all who believe. I held up first a ripped, burnt, & riddled-with-holes robe that the Scriptures use to depict all of the righteousness of man before the face of God (Isa.64:6). This includes all the religions of men. I then asked the audience, what if someone wanted to attend this Banquet & had only done one thing wrong their entire life (obviously, hypothetically speaking, for sure!). I then brought out a white wedding dress, which had only one red spot on it. Most of us men would retort, “What’s the problem? It’s only got one spot on it!” However, to a woman, particularly a Bride, “the whole thing is ruined!”. So it goes with a righteousness that is anything less than perfect (Gal.3:10). I had begun this part of the message citing that most women would be out of their mind to entrust the purchase of her wedding gown to her fiancé. Not one woman in the audience disagreed with that! But, I told them, in order to part of Jesus’ Bride, you MUST trust Him to purchase your “heavenly” wedding gown for you, as this necessary requirement, only HE can do! **“ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, LORD?”**

Well, these feelings of Peter I mentioned above I myself encountered when I saw & came to believe the next extraordinary possibility re: the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. In Luke 12:37, Jesus said that when He returns, He would have His faithful servants sit at table (I can conceive of no other table at His return than the wedding feast table!), rise up from the table Himself, & wait on them! It was here, at this realization, that I, like Peter, could not receive it! My heart screamed, “NO! Lord! You can’t! Haven’t You been humiliated enough re: Your condescending incarnation (humbling enough in itself!), Your rejection of men, Your being hated by them without cause, Your ignoble sufferings upon the cross?!” And yet, it seems to me Jesus once again humbles Himself, the Servant of servants, & waits on His people. “I go to prepare a place for you”; “He prepares a table for me...” Could it be, besides preparing dwelling places in Heaven for us right now, that Jesus is also “*setting the table*” for His great wedding feast for His Bride? Beloved, from what I’ve recently seen in the Scriptures, I cannot put it past Him! Like Peter, I couldn’t take any more of Him, His grace, & His glory. It was more than I could conceive of & receive. And yet, I truly felt like I “hit upon something” in the Scriptures re: the nature of our Great Savior. Few things I have seen re: Jesus in The Word have brought such awe, humility, & gratitude to my soul. Trying to convey these awe-imparting

truths to the audience that day were very difficult to do without crying, & that I did. Afterwards, so many people came up to me, both old & young, believers & unbelievers, & said how much the words re: Jesus touched them. One of my other nephews just broke as I held him; the soundman said “he liked it”, where-upon I asked him if I could pray for him, to which he conceded. My father told Kim that if I hadn’t preached at this wedding, “there wouldn’t be anything re: Jesus in it at all”. Wow! And that coming from my father! One of the groomsmen’s fathers came up to me with his eyes watering. When he asked me about the message, I thought at first he had a problem with it. Turns out he was a believer. He wanted to hear it again. Another relative by marriage, whose soul I am very concerned about, turned to my youngest sister & said, “He’s good”. Another woman who was a sister in the Lord came up to me at the reception & said she was an entertainer on a cruise ship & that the Lord had touched her deeply. I marvel as I type this as if you will recall, I was so very nervous until right when I got up. Jesus surely took over. One of my favorite lines from the Disney movie “Aladdin”, is when Aladdin declares to the Genie something to the effect of, “The only reason I’m anything is because of you! I’m nothing without you!” How very true that is, re: us & Jesus. If He pulls out, Beloved, it’s over! Praise His Name, He has promised NOT to pull out of His relationship of “Fiance” to us (II Cor.11:3). He becomes our “Groom” at the Second Coming. Don’t worry, the Lord was faithful to allow amid all of these kudos a criticism of it that deeply stumbled me. Ouch! It hurt so much & instantly popped the bubble of blessing I was enjoying! I had to really deal with it—given my pride & over-sensitivity to everything, it took quite a while! But, our God was doing me a favor, as it kept me heavily leaning on Him after an apparent “victory” for the gospel. It reminds me something I saw in the Word many years ago re: so many servants of God: “After blessing, comes testing”. And so it was. Another caution I felt in my heart as Kim & I drove home late that evening, was that this glorious event would not just be another “Ezekiel” incident, where, the Israelites enjoyed listening to this prophet speak, as one would listen to an entertainer, but they *didn’t harken* to his words (Ezk.33:32). May the Lord have mercy on the listeners of this message re: His Glorious Son & His gospel, & open their ears to hear, & do!

## Michael

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### Ministry/events for NOVEMBER and those not listed in last month’s newsletter:

**Oct. 4: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Flashpoint worship team: drummer**

**Oct. 9: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Celebrate Recovery speaker**

**Oct. 11: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Sunday a.m. worship team: drummer**

**Oct. 15: Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, DE: EMF pastors’ mtg.**

**Oct. 18: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Sunday a.m. worship drummer//p.m. Flashpoint drummer**

**Oct. 20: Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA: Fall banquet; THC association member: attendee**

**Oct. 23: Spinal Care of DE, Stanton, DE: 2<sup>nd</sup> lower back injection (on our 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary!)**

**Oct. 26-Nov.1: Bay Village, OH: visiting our oldest son Matthew & his family**

**Nov. 3: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Elverson, PA: HNC board mtg.//New Holland, PA: pastors’ mtg.**

**Nov. 8: Full Gospel Family Life Center, Lagrangeville, NY: Sun. a.m family service**

**Nov. 10: New Covenant Church, Audubon, NJ: Elim area pastors’ mtg.**

**Needs & Recent Reads:** Kim & I have been praying for more open doors for ministry. This year has marked a drastic reduction versus the past nine. “The Jesus You Can’t Ignore”, by John MacArthur;  
**Recent book purchases:** The Gospel According to John (Commentary)—D.A. Carson; The Genesis Record—Henry Morris; The Merged Gospels—Gary Crossland