

*May 1, 2013*

Dear *Friends & Family*,

## THE BIBLE? YES & NO.

I would venture to guess that most of you viewed the recent airing of the 10-part series called *The Bible*, especially since it was the highest rated cable show of all time. Kim & I have never had cable in 35+ years of marriage, but have relied solely on antennas. To be honest, I did not plan on viewing it even if I could, as I assumed, when I heard about it, that it was just another of the many documentaries that have aired through the years re: biblical subjects, which have almost always been "poisonous" spiritually. Why? They more often than not would interview & give significant weight to liberal, Bible-denying so-called scholars, who would rip the sacred Scriptures apart & demean as ignorant anyone who dared believe what they plainly assert. However, our oldest son *Matthew*, also a conservative minister of the Word, happened to purchase the entire set. He asked if I wanted to view it while we were on a recent visit to their home in *Cleveland*. It was not what I anticipated. It turns out it was not a documentary at all, but a biblical miniseries. It undertook the monumental task of attempting to give a dramatic survey of the entire Bible in 10-45 minute segments. This was no small task, I assure you. For the most part I loved it & was both surprised & blessed that it covered a number of biblical characters & events that I have never seen dramatized, such as, the capture & blinding of *King Zedekiah* by *Nebuchadnezzar* [not to mention the slaying of his two sons!], the *golden image* setup by the same king on the plain of Dura, the Lord's use of *King Cyrus* of Persia [though, I have to admit, I was dumbfounded at the license taken in having Cyrus posed as the king of the biblical events that actually occurred under Darius], Daniel in the lions' den, etc. Being a lover & reenactor of Bible movies for decades now, I kept a close, keen, scrutinous eye on the acting [to this day I do not understand why, but it seems to me that the majority of biblical acting by God's people tends to be on the cheesey side. One would think that Christians, being the temples of the creative *Spirit of God*, would excel in this field!], costumes [my pastor teases me that I'm obsessed with realism re: this - OK, so what if it's true!], faithfulness to the biblical text, etc. The producers obviously were Christians, though as I watched night after night I began to wonder at times

how they could stretch the biblical account as far as they did with theatrical license(?). There was a statement projected before each episode that they strove to depict the spirit of the Bible, et al. With this I would concur for the most part. I heard someone skeptically comment before I viewed the series re: Noah's **ark** leaking. Well, I did notice it too, but at least it was only leaking from the top. Otherwise, I would have a more serious issue with it. One of the major issues that really glitched my spirit & troubled me was their depiction of the **Hebrew** judge/hero from the tribe of Dan, a.k.a. **Samson** - he was black-with dreadlocks! [by the way, **John the Baptist** had dreadlocks too! L] I couldn't believe it. What were they thinking? [I have two grandsons who are African-Americans & another one on the way, so I think I can safely say it's not a personal issue! J] If you're going to call your production *The Bible*?, you would think you'd strive to be faithful to it! To me, this was a no-brainer & easy to rectify. Huh. I just didn't get it.

## ANGELIC IDENTITY CRISIS?

Perhaps more troubling than Samson's poorly-depicted ethnic roots, was the series' portrayal of the two angels who visited Lot in Sodom. I could not believe what I was seeing! These two angelic visitors sent from Jehovah seemed more like they were sent from a **2013** political correctness convention! If my memory serves me right, one was black & the other was *Asian*! Oh my word. What in the world were they thinking? You might think or say, "Hey Michael? Lay off! Have *you* ever seen an angel?!" Uh, not that I know of. I did marry one, though. Can't & don't angels appear at times in *human* form?! Yes. I admit it's all conjecture on my part, but one would think the Lord would send these two angels in the human form of **Jews** ! At that time, there was probably not a black or Asian within a thousand miles of Lot! The Scriptures say in Hebrews that some in biblical history have entertained angels without knowing it. Uh, I *think* Abraham, Lot, & their families might suspect something was up if a Negro or Asian human showed up! I just don't get the producers' thinking on this. Yes-I absolutely love interracial churches! Yes-peoples of all nations will be gathered around our Blessed Jesus' throne! But the issue here is faithfully depicting *biblical history*. It would have been so easy to do. But Beloved, lest you begin to think I'm prejudiced or something, that angelic ethnicity technicality (?) is nowhere's near the worst of this particular scene in the miniseries. [Coincidentally & interestingly enough, I ministered recently to big groups of *African Americans* & *Chinese* brethren, & loved every minute of it & hope so very much that they invite me back!]

## WINGLESS WIMPS ?

These two angelic visitors were running in fear of the citizens of Sodom, with **blood** on at least one of their foreheads, seeking refuge & protection from Lot - not to mention the fact that they were dressed & fought like *Samurai warriors*! Good grief! I could not believe what my eyes were seeing. How very grievous this was, & how very, very foreign to the biblical witness & testimony re: the two angels that visited Sodom, not to mention angelic beings in the Scripture in general. Their power & majesty far exceed man's. The weakest angel could easily kill thousands of men. Funny-the text says the angels told Lot to leave the city because the Lord had sent them to *destroy it*, & yet, the movie depicts them fighting the Sodomites *like men* with swords. Oh, I was sick. Beloved, we must not forget the vast array of angelic beings: *Seraphim, Cherubim, The 4 Living Creatures, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the 12 Legions of them*, etc. who waited with baited-breath for Jesus' signal from the *Garden of Gethsemane* to come & rescue Him, though, to be sure, Jesus needed NO help from them!

## HOLLYWOOD or SQUARE ?

The text records the angels' reply when entreated by Lot to spend the night in his home- *No. We will spend the night in the square.* [Gen. 19:2] The townsquare of *Sodom*?? It was by far the most vulnerable & dangerous spot in the city! I love that about our God. He chooses to send His servants where the action is, where things are most dangerous- right in the middle of the sin-soaked city. How could He? Because the angels were endowed with HIS power! How very far removed from what actually happened was the movie's depiction of it!

## HE CAN BE TAUGHT?

I was both dumbfounded & put in awe upon a recent realization from the book of *Revelation*. When the apostle John received the revelation of **Jesus Christ** in His glorified state, he fell at His feet as one dead. Yet, this same apostle *also* bowed down to worship at the feet of *the angel* who delivered the revelation of Jesus to him! This was early in the book. After chapters of further revelatory visions of the power, might, strength, glory, & sovereignty of the Lord Jesus, still, in the very last chapter of Revelation, John *again* bows down to worship the vision-delivering angel! What does this say of the terrifying majesty of the angelic hosts, Beloved? And yet, the movie depicts them, as I said, running in fear, seeking refuge from Lot, **bloody**, having to fight with swords for their very

survival, etc. If you want to see an awesome depiction of this very sobering event in biblical history, I cannot recommend enough another movie of the same name, a.k.a., **THE BIBLE**, from 1966. The so-called critics gave it 1 star. I strongly disagree. **Peter O'Toole** hauntingly plays the two angels [yes, both of them] who visit Lot in Sodom. O'Toole is a strikingly fair-skinned handsome man, hence, it's not hard to imagine the Sodomites' attraction to him. And yet the awe & self-assurance he (they) carry as the representatives of the Most High God is frightening. He (they) easily blind & dispel the lust-filled Sodomites with a divine stare of blinding judgment that makes me tingle as I type. [As an aside, when I portray **Cain** out of my Time Machine, I virtually carbon-copy **Richard Harris'** depiction of him from this same movie].

## WILL THE REAL JESUS PLEASE STAND UP?

I'm sure many will disagree with me on this one, but while I thought the series' depiction of Jesus was 'OK' [The actor portrayed much of The Savior's gentleness, meekness, tender-heartedness, sensitivity, etc.], I thought He was a bit too much on the soft side. For what it's worth, still, to this day, of my many Bible movies, my favorite depiction by far of the Lord Jesus [And-come on now, is there anyone on earth who can come close to Him? I think not.] was done by **Robert Powell** in the *Jesus of Nazareth* miniseries from 1977. While I am both surprised & glad re: the popularity of a TV production re: The Bible I still ache for faithfulness & precision re: the biblical witness. That is what I strive for daily in my study, teaching, & preaching. May He help me.

Kim & I sincerely thank you for reading this far. I pray the preceding thesis was not a caustic, critical run-on. We have more than enough of that in The Church & in our world-I pray it was an expose' by someone who deeply loves the word of God, & believes everyone & everything, sooner or later, must bow its knee to its authority, & to the One Whom it points to & glorifies.

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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 [Hopewell Network](#) 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 to speak of, 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 separ-ately 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 MAY & those not listed in last month's newsletter:**

April 5: Painters Crossing, PA: hsc camp directors' mtg.

April 17:a.m.: New Covenant Church, Audubon, NJ: EF pastors' mtg.//p.m.: Newark, DE:Torres  
Funeral

April 20: IC, Wilmington, DE: DEHOP worship team drummer

April 21: IC, Wilmington, DE: The Father's House children's church: worship leader

April 24: IC, Wilmington, DE: Tabernacle of David: worship leader

May 3: IC, Wilmington, DE: Celebrate Recovery Ministry: lead worship & preach

May 5: IC, Wilmington, DE: The Father's House Children's Church: worship leader

May 6-8: Lancaster County Christian School, Lampeter, PA: spiritual emphasis week

May 9-14: Merritt Island, FL: visit my dad & 2 of my sisters

May 30: Morgantown, PA: hsc board mtg.