

December 1, 2010

Dear *Friends & Family*,

(10/30) It's still *October* & much of the November newsletter has not even been sent out, but I wanted to share with you re: a unique day this past Thursday. I helped chaperone dozens of 5-6 year old kindergarteners, including our oldest granddaughter, for her class Halloween/Harvest outing. It was a lovely, memorable time. What was unique about it was that that very same evening I attended a home Bible study for the first time, whose host was 94 years old! I had the honor & blessing of sharing the word of the Lord with these seasoned saints. I consider it a high privilege & blessing to be graced by our Lord to minister to both age groups, from the very young, to, well, the very "seasoned"? J

"BOLD, BRAZEN, BELLIGERENT BLOGGERS"

Most preachers of the Word are familiar with the recent statistic that indicates 57% of the American populace are biblically illiterate. Gone are the days when a minister can preach a sermon & assume that his audience is familiar with basic biblical background knowledge. Unbelievably, with many of today's children, this also includes the "famous & familiar" Bible stories that many of us grew up with, including its men & women of renown. This ignorance of God's Word often surfaces in popular opinion polls, & perhaps most abrasively & arrogantly, in internet website blogs. Cyberspace has afforded anyone with a computer the "soapbox" & platform to air their views not only among their peers but also literally around the globe—in a matter of seconds! I get my news via a brief scan of internet websites. People's vicious-ness & quickness to opine can be easily seen in their free-for-all comments regarding current events & issues. What is even more unnerving is when the masses of biblically illiterate post blogs & comments re: theological issues. From time to time, I love to watch my favorite preachers on *YouTube*, particularly when they are on *The Larry King Show*, or some other popular secular program. With the pressure on, some have remained faithful to the witness of *The Scriptures*, while others have compromised &/or toned-down the gospel. Anyway, at the bottom of each video that you view, there is a "column of comments", or "blogs", where viewers can post thoughts, comments, &/or criticisms of what they just viewed. Many post self-made video presentations to mock God, His gospel, & His messengers. I marvel how quickly, unreservedly, & arrogantly they will do so. Often, their remarks are caustic, vicious, hostile, & obscene. What seems to me to be the trademark characteristic of such blogs is their dogmatism. They are so sure their opinions are "it". Most are based on *their own reason, logic, emotions, experiences, & feelings* re: the given issue, & not on an absolute source *outside of themselves*, namely, the Word of God. What increases this tragedy is the element of "influence". On Judgment Day, men will give an account to the Lord for every idle & careless word they speak (Mt.12:36). Surely, this includes words written, typed, & sung. Your words (unless you're a hypocrite) reveal your thoughts. On that Great Day, even the secrets of the heart will be shown (Rom.2:16). One's accountability & liability will increase before the Lord given how many others one affected with their false propositions about Him.

“1ST CENTURY BLOGGERS”

Although the internet is a relatively new phenomenon, primitive “bloggers” certainly existed in Jesus’ day; that is, those who dogmatized & broadcasted to others, as today, their interpretations of Jesus & certain events that surrounded His earthly life. There are so many, I cannot be exhaustive. The first one that comes to mind is in John 12 when Jesus is relating His purpose for “coming to this hour”, i.e., to die. He entreats the Father to glorify His Name. The audible, heavenly voice of the Father replies to Him. Immediately the bloggers kick in. Some assert it was an angel who spoke. Others said it thundered. *Both were wrong!* On another occasion, the Jews were dogmatically proposing that Jesus couldn’t be the Messiah, because “no prophet comes out of Galilee”. They were *so sure* Jesus was from & *born* in Nazareth of Galilee, being totally ignorant of His travels with Joseph & Mary as a child from His birth-place, a.k.a., Bethlehem, which *was* the foretold birthplace of the Messiah, to flee from the wrath of Herod. *Wrong again! And yet, they were so sure!* They even exclaimed, “Look & see! You will find that no prophet comes from Galilee!” (Jn.7:52) And, “we *know* where this man is from!” (Jn.7:27). Earlier, surrounding Jesus’ feeding of the 5,000, He exclaimed that He was the Bread of Life. Those surrounding Him retorted, “Isn’t this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father & mother *we know?*” (Jn.6:42). Once again, they were convinced what they “knew” was the truth. Yet, they were totally oblivious to the fact of Mary’s “immaculate conception”, hence, making GOD His father & not Joseph. On a more serious charge, Christ’s opponents “blogged” & accused Him saying, “Do we not say *rightly* that you are a Samaritan & have a demon?!” (Jn.8:48). In reality however, Jesus was *the Jew* of Jews & filled with the Holy Spirit w/o measure! (Jn.3:34).

Like Jesus, Like Paul

The Apostle Paul, Jesus’ chosen servant, suffered from the hands of “bloggers” too. After performing a miracle in Lystra, the townsfolk exclaimed with such “certainty”: “The gods have become like men & have come down to us!” (Acts 14:11). This “certainty” of wrong belief led them to the certainty of wrong behavior! They wound up worshipping Paul & Barnabas as gods. In another town where Paul stirred up trouble by preaching the gospel, a.k.a., “Ephesus”, the town clerk calmed the townspeople by dogmat-ically reminding them of the *undeniable facts* that their city was where the image of the goddess Diana fell from heaven (19:36). Once again, despite the obvious “facts”, no image had ever fallen from heaven there! Later, on the island of Malta, when Paul was bitten by a deadly, poisonous snake, the natives assuredly propounded: “*Undoubtedly* this man is a murderer, & although he has been saved from the sea, ‘Justice’ has not allowed him to live” (28:4). Men, in their ignorance, not only think, but too often *speak* (or write & type) things they are so sure of that are just plain wrong. This occurs daily by the millions with bloggers online. And, it occurred daily in biblical times. Regarding the Bible’s truth, to be wrong is deadly, even damning. Many men “certain” of their views & opinions have followed their “certainty” right into Hell, when their views have been opposed to Scripture truth. Jesus declared, “Unless you believe that I AM He, you will die in your sin (Jn.8:24). And yet, not only do they seem fit to remain deceived themselves, but by broadcasting their erroneous views, they either lead or confirm others

trapped in the same errors. Jesus warned His disciples that in the last days *many* would come in His name & deceive *many* (Mt.24:5). If only men followed the example of Mary, Jesus' mother, whose miraculous conception of Him by the Holy Spirit we celebrate this month. When she heard "hard things", the Scriptures say that she "pondered them in her heart". (Lk.2:19)

"OUR ANCHOR IN EVANGELISM"

With a major part of my calling from God being evangelism, I would despair of it, given the ominous degree of cults, false religions, & even aberrant "Christian" groups in the world, were it not for the glorious & comforting truth of Scripture, that God chose His people *before the foundation of the world* (Eph.1:4). In the same portion of Scripture cited above where Jesus warned of mass deception, He also gave the *huge consolation* to His disciples whom His Father had chosen that it was *not possible* for them to be deceived! God's people are so often referred to as His "elect". This seldom heard truth is one of the most soul-comforting in the Bible. It simply means that God has chosen His people (I Cor.1:26-30; I Thes. 1:4), they have not chosen Him (Jn.15:16), asserted by Jesus Himself. In fact, His choice of them enables them to choose Him! Their names were written in *The Lamb's Book of Life* before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8, 17:8). The Lord knows those who are His (II Tim. 2:22). The only plants (people) that will be plucked up at the end of the world at the time of the harvest, are those whom *the Father has not planted* (Mt.15:13). Christians are a people *given to Jesus* by the Father (Jn.6:37, 10:29, 17:2,6,9,24). If the Father had not done so, no one *would be able to* come to Jesus, nor *want to* (Jn.6:44, 65) given the hor-rific & debilitating power of original sin. May He help us to humble ourselves & *rest* in this glorious truth. I can think of no better CHRISTmas present! Because of it, I can preach the gospel in the most difficult circumstances, knowing the Lord will gather in His own, in His time, whether they come under my preaching or not. May it be so.
Have a blessed Christmas!

Michael and Kim