

## WINTER 2007-2008

I have been privileged to live next door to three Jackson brothers: Cecil, Hugh, and Rex (a fourth brother, Hardy, as well as a sister, Ann, live a short distance down the road). Hugh, the last surviving brother who lived next door, went to be with Jesus a few weeks ago. They have been the best neighbors imaginable, always there when it counted, and always real. In fact, “superficial” was a word foreign to all three, for they were who they were, no strings attached—what you saw was what you got. They were also men who worked hard but required little. Their idea of a good time, after a hard day’s work, was to sit under their huge shade tree or on their front porch and wave to all who passed by. Cecil never drove a vehicle, not even a tractor, so he tilled his ground and raised his crops by means a mule. Being the cook of the household (all three brothers were bachelors), he would frequently walk to downtown Hardin, three quarters of a mile away, purchase his groceries, and walk home. Hugh was a skilled carpenter and hard worker. One day while building my parent’s home, my dad asked him a question but got no response. In Hugh’s mind, talking was something you did after 5:00 pm, after quitting time. He was the standard when it came to measuring the skill and efficiency of a carpenter in these parts. Rex held a job at a local stone quarry, always showing up on time and giving the employer an honest day’s work.

Cecil and Hugh would go to Shop-O-Rama once a year to purchase their wardrobe—a new pair of boots and two pairs of bibbed (“Key”) overalls. What I learned from these brothers is priceless, for every time I have been tempted to desire more, pull strings to promote myself, think more highly of myself than I should, they were always there to remind me of a better way. They had beaten the system and could have cared less what others thought or said concerning their lifestyle, even though they were a very caring band of brothers. So how was it that they beat the system? They did so by viewing free time as more important than money, notoriety, or power. What successful men they were! I will forever be indebted to them for their wonderful example.

The purpose of our newsletters is to encourage you in your walk with the Creator. Never do we want to discourage or bring confusion, for there is enough of that going around for several lifetimes. But the one thing we must all realize is the crisis we face with “time.” There never seems to be enough of it, yet its value is superceded by few things in life. God gave each of us the same length of day: twenty-four hours. Therefore, the problem lies not in the area of deficiency but rather the manner in which it is used. We just can’t seem to learn what the Jackson’s knew all along—that time is more important than possessions. Therefore, they were living proof that the system can be beaten, a lesson we all need to sit up and take note of.

Why is time so precious and of such great value? What you do with it determines who you become. If you spend it on the less than excellent, you will die unfulfilled, having missed out on God’s best. Time is fascinating in that when invested properly it multiplies itself. It is much like microwave popcorn. Place it in the proper environment and it flourishes beyond measure. In fact, I set an interesting phenomenon in motion some thirty three years ago by making a relatively simple choice. I gave God five minutes a day and guess what happened? He multiplied it to ten. I then invested the ten and He gave me thirty. When the thirty was invested, an hour came out of nowhere—and the trend continues even today. Just as the farmer plants with the hope of reaping more than he sows, so it is with time. Therefore, the problem is not enough of it, but rather the manner in which it is utilized.

When invested properly, time yields wisdom, wisdom being the capacity to view life from God’s

perspective. With wisdom comes an ability to redefine terms that the world has grossly misrepresented, terms such as “success.” Defined in normal terminology, “success” is always associated with what one has accomplished in the realm of money, notoriety, or power, “the big three.” Defined properly, however, it has to do with discovering God’s purpose for one’s life, what we were created for. Money, notoriety, or power may follow, which is fine, but they were never the goal if the heart is in sync with its Maker. Is it not interesting that those who can be trusted with such things are individuals who don’t have a desire to possess them?

Even Paul redefined a term that the world has horribly distorted—“and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself” (Colossians 2:2). Paul viewed “wealth” as a knowledge of Jesus Himself. Therefore Paul, like the Jackson’s, had grown past the ever-so-shallow perspective of defining wealth in the same manner as the masses (Philippians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:8). Can we do the same? We can if we are willing to fear the one thing Samson feared—the weakness that comes with being like all other men (Judges 16:17). Think about it. Family News

Kim, Benjamin and I are doing well and enjoying this season of life. My home continues to be my haven and a constant source of encouragement. Not that our family is void of difficulty and disappointment, but we truly enjoy each other and the ministry to which we have been called. Kim continues to wear a variety of hats, one of which is home schooling Benjamin. In case you have never tried it, home schooling your offspring is greatly rewarding but tremendously challenging. Kim spends a lot of time searching for materials that will best benefit our son.

Benjamin worked this fall for Keith Harris, a local farmer and friend who loves the Lord and serves as a great example for our son. Benjamin’s job was to drive a tractor during harvest season. Farming remains Benjamin’s passion as far as a vocation is concerned, so we will see what God does with that to mold him into the man he needs to be.

The new news on the home front is that we have another young man now living on the hill. His name is Jahmal Clemmons, and he moved here from Chicago, Illinois about a month ago. Can you imagine moving from “the hood” in Chicago to a farm in western Kentucky? It took a tremendous amount of courage for him to do so, but he is adapting well and adding a flavor to our family that we greatly appreciate. Benjamin views Jarmal as his “big brother,” and for the first time in Benjamin’s home school experience he has a classmate, increasing the enrollment of Wadesboro Family School a whopping “2.” Even though Jarmal lives with Brandon Karstetter and Adam Underhill in the house on the front of the farm, he spends quite a bit of time in our home. He is a great kid and very personable. We look forward to introducing him to you, and you to him, during your next visit.

Mother seems to be doing better as far as adjusting to the variable associated with losing a spouse. We all miss dad so very much, but God’s grace has carried us and will continue to do so. Thanksgiving was not as difficult as we had anticipated, and the Christmas season has been pretty much the same. We want to thank all of you for the encouragement and support you have directed our way. It will be a year in January since dad went home to Jesus. We are certain that he is enjoying Him as never before, smiling bigger than ever as he meets and greets the saints of old.

### **Ministry News**

We have been encouraged this fall and winter by the quality of the people who have visited the

hill. Therefore, we very seldom teach a captive audience. Why? The people who visit are normally passionate about the things of God. That makes for a very interesting environment, one that encourages an honest look at the Scriptures regardless of one's preconceived notions or ideology. One of the miraculous things that has transpired here over the years is that so many different people from so many different backgrounds can study the Scripture and draw the same conclusions about what they are to believe.

How Rick and Donna Underhill and their son Adam (who will be attending Murray State University as a freshman this fall) are now living on the hill. They have one other son, Kyle, who is presently attending the University of Southern Indiana. Kim and I met the Underhill's several years ago in their hometown, Newburgh, Indiana. They started visiting the ministry and decided they would like to be more involved. The log home directly in front of our meeting area is their place of residence. They are here for a variety of reasons, the main of which is to invest their lives into the live of others. They will also be responsible for overseeing the administrative responsibilities associated with the daily operations of the ministry. They are a tremendous asset and a welcomed breath of freshness. Please pray for them as they adjust to a new "job," a new area of the country, and many more things that go with the territory of "ministry."

### **Some Events to Consider Attending on the Hill**

**April 11-13, 2008** Annual men's retreat for fathers, their sons, and single men of all ages. **June 21, 2008** Workday on the Hill **July 6-12, 2008** Summer Camp for ages 13-18 **August-September 2008** (TBA) Two-day school. Topic: Romans 1-8 **October 17-19, 2008** Annual fall retreat for men and women, both single and married.

### **A Word of Thanks**

Thanks for your prayers and generous support over the years. We still view the ministry as being explained only in terms of Jesus, our original vision when we started this most interesting journey. Our prayer for you is that you can somehow comprehend what your faith and friendship mean to us.

### **THOUGHTS FROM THE HILL**

From the first page of this newsletter, it is obvious that tough choices must be made if we are to see God's purpose fulfilled in our lives. Seasons of extreme discouragement must be countered with God's truth as it relates to the times in which we live. If not, we will believe the lie that we have invested our lives in vain. The following addresses this issue, all of which is taken from a commentary I am presently writing on the book of Isaiah. I trust it will serve as an encouragement.

Is. 49:4 But I said, "I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the Lord, And My reward with My God."

Jesus, at least for a short span of time, had doubts as to the effectiveness of the ministry to which He had been called. He viewed Himself as having "toiled in vain," spending His "strength for nothing and vanity" due to Israel's rejection of His message. This prayer to the Father was stated during a very difficult season, probably while at Gethsemane (Luke 22:44). These doubts were

momentary, for He followed with statements of confidence pertaining to the Father's ability to see Him through. Even though He had experienced rejection at the hands of His own people, He still trusted the Father to use His circumstances as a major player in the Father's overall plan (read the last half of Isaiah 49:4). And, oh, what a plan would unfold.

Is. 49:5 And now says the Lord, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the Lord, And My God is My strength),

Verses 5-13 are an answer to Jesus's prayer recorded in the first four verses of this chapter. He was "formed" from the womb for His mission as Servant, just as He was called from the womb according to Isaiah 49:1. (Note: The second Person of the trinity has always been deity, therefore the word "formed" has to do with His taking on flesh and becoming God-man. It by no stretch of the imagination teaches that the Son in His totality was formed in Mary's womb.)

One of the main reasons the Lord formed Jesus was for the purpose of bringing Israel back to Himself in a state of belief. The Servant would also be the catalyst through which the individual members of the nation would be gathered to the Lord from throughout the world. This will occur in association with Jesus's Second Coming, after which the Gentile nations will assist the Jews in their return to their homeland (Isaiah 14:1-2; 49:22). All of this is accomplished as a result of two things. The Servant was "honored in the sight of the Lord" ("honorable" in the ASV) and God's strength had become His strength. There is no doubt as to the source of Jesus's strength—the Father Himself (John 14:10).

Is. 49:6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Not only would the Servant eventually bring salvation and restoration to Israel, but through Israel's initial rejection of the Servant, salvation would reach the Gentiles ("reach to the end of the earth"). In fact, the Servant would be "a light to the nations," the Gentile nations, and it was for this reason He could say, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5). Verses such as Isaiah 56:6-8 and Isaiah 65:1 give additional input concerning the blessings to be poured out upon the Gentiles as a result of Israel's initial rejection of the Servant.

The principles taught in Isaiah 49:6 have a counterpart in the New Testament. Paul, in Romans 11:11-32, describes how salvation came to the Gentiles as a result of Israel's rejection of the Son. There we also find that the church's special relationship with Christ will eventually provoke the Jews to jealousy, causing them to return to the Father in a state of submission, awe, and adoration. In fact, all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26), that is, every Jew alive at the end of the Tribulation. Only an all-knowing, all-powerful, sovereign God could come up with such a plan. This is even more mind boggling when we consider that it is accomplished with every man and woman possessing a free will to choose as they please. Paul's words of Romans 11:33-36 are more than appropriate considering the vastness of God's sovereignty and authority. Truly, what a mighty God we serve!

It is obvious that the Father's plan included Israel's eventual acceptance of the Savior they once rejected. Consequently, Jesus's ministry at His First Coming was overwhelmingly successful. It most definitely was not ineffective and vain, as Jesus momentarily viewed it according to Isaiah

49:4. What then encouraged Him when things looked so bleak and out of control? The promise that the rejection by His own people was something the Father understood beforehand and would use for good. After all, not only would Jesus's life, death, and resurrection bring salvation to believing Jews throughout history, and culminate with every Jew alive at the end of the Tribulation accepting Him as Savior, but salvation would come to the Gentiles as well, confirmed by the number of Gentiles who have accepted Christ since the church's inception in Acts 2. Consequently, the rejection by His own people, each of which had a freedom to choose Him as Savior, actually resulted in a greater opportunity for the Jews and Gentiles alike.

With this in mind, how do you and I persevere when tempted to base the effectiveness of our calling upon the number of people who buy the message? We must, first off, know that the ultimate calling is to know Jesus intimately, from which springs forth the most exciting adventure imaginable. In fact, when knowing Him and the power of His resurrection (Philippians 3:10) is the issue rather than how many are accepting the message, we can understand His will (Romans 12:2) and truly live. This is how Jesus came out of His temporary state of the doldrums, for He had spent a wealth of time enjoying truth at the feet of His Father (Isaiah 50:4-5). Therefore, when He was tempted to measure success based upon improper criteria, He had the words of Isaiah to spur Him on. Can you imagine opening God's word and finding Scriptures that describe your experience in ministry? Obviously, Jesus could do so, but so can we! What then can we expect? Consider the following.

I view Revelation 2:1—3:22 as describing the different stages of church history. Therefore, Revelation 2:1—3:22 is not a description of any individual church, but rather a general outline of the history of the "visible" church while on earth. For instance, the church at Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7) is a picture of the early visible church when she was alive and vibrant. The church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22), however, "Laodicea" meaning "people ruling," is a picture of the final state of the visible church. This means that a time will come when the Lord no longer rules the visible church, for it will be a man-ruled institution. This explains why Jesus, according to Revelation 3:20, is described as knocking on the door of the visible church trying to get in. It also helps us interpret Paul's words to Timothy recorded in 2Timothy 3:12—4:4, verses that warn against false teachers and speak of a time when man will be more interested in hearing error than the truth of the Scriptures. I deem this to be the last state of the visible church before all "true" believers are taken out at the Rapture. Consequently, the visible church, as we know it, will eventually lose her spirituality and become reprobate. How much time transpires before this occurs is uncertain, but for sure it will come to pass.

Because the visible church is made up of people, fewer individuals within the visible church will pursue the truth as history unveils herself. Yes, seasons of spiritual awareness will break forth, especially during times of crisis, but enduring interest in the things of God will be anything but the norm. Only in knowing this will the redeemed, the true church, many of which will serve as missionaries to the visible, reprobate church, be capable of interpreting the signs of the times and remain encouraged. What an adventure awaits those who allow the truth to intensify their passion for the One who has gone before us. Aren't we blessed to be a part of such a wonderful adventure? Walk on!

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