

Winter 2006 - 2007

As I write, I am more thankful than ever for the Jesus I know and the truth that He represents. In fact, as much as I am loved and blessed by my family and friends, it is His Person that remains the anchor of my soul. His life sustains me (Romans 5:10), His rest comforts me (Hebrews 4:9-10), and His sovereignty truly rules over any and every circumstance of life (Psalm 103:19). This doesn't mean that I understand what He is up to in all aspects of my life, because, frankly, I understand less today concerning the subject than at any time in the past. Of late, in fact, God has allowed an assortment of events to cross my path that have challenged me at the very core of my being. I am convinced, however, that regardless of how much His divine will confuses my understanding, He remains the only true constant in life. I am convinced as well that faith is never to rest upon expectations that demand an answer to all the inconsistencies of life, but rather upon an unwavering trust in His unchanging faithfulness. I have never been more certain that Jesus is all that His word proclaims Him to be—that He will take care of us, that He truly is the way, the truth, and the life, and that He wins. But meanwhile, I am tested daily concerning the validity of these truths—as to whether I will give in to the enemy's lies or lean in to the Holy One addressed so profoundly in the Scriptures. What a journey, this life of faith! Thank God for the truth, the one constant that allows us to trust Him even when our feelings (and they don't count) tell us that we have been totally forsaken and hung out to dry!

Kim and I have been confronted recently with a number of challenging issues as we consider the wisest use of our time. In the midst of the smokescreen, a friend sent us the following quote which helped restore perspective: "I don't fear failure, I do fear being successful at the things which don't matter." I guess the most difficult, and to be blatantly honest, the most disheartening thing that Kim and I face, is the degree of apathy within the overall body of Christ. The busyness of God's people in their everyday lives, and the resulting lack of discernment concerning the things which matter, perplexes us beyond words. Not that Kim and I have arrived and always make the wisest of choices, but at least there is an awareness of our need to live above the albatross of constant activity and the resulting emptiness. So many busy themselves, even in the realm of spiritual activity, to the point that there is no time for the nurturing of the soul. If the highest positions are for those who have qualified in secret, we, as the body of Christ, must overcome our fear of silence and learn to view the alone times in life as the most necessary. It is during times of silence that we learn to discern, as well as properly define, the noise generated by the busied culture in which we live (Luke 5:16; Hebrews 5:14; Jeremiah 15:19). It is as though many who bear the name of Christ have become afraid of having seconds, minutes, hours, and, on rare occasions, even days with no agenda other than contemplating the invisible, yet most important aspect of life—Jesus Himself. Our prayer is that God will raise up individuals who don't care about political correctness within the world system nor within Christendom, and do the right thing regardless of the cost. This can be done only when God's people stop trying to do God's work for Him, cease measuring their worth based upon the number of listeners, enjoy His Person in an environment of silence, and trust His indwelling presence as the bedrock and sustenance of their very being. To Him be the glory!

Don't misunderstand. Kim and I are greatly blessed by the faithful friends we have been privileged to know, teach, learn from, and fellowship with over the years. But our hearts hurt, as hopefully your heart hurts, due to the general apathy within many who label themselves as believers. Even Jesus, who lived in a continual state of rest, had times when the spiritual condition of the Jewish nation troubled Him beyond anything we could imagine (Matthew 23:23-39). So how did the overall body of Christ arrive at the place she is today? Why has she, in some (better "many") circles, strayed from interpreting the Scriptures literally and chosen to interpret

them allegorically? That is the subject of “Thoughts From the Hill” included in this publication. I hope you enjoy what you read there, knowing that much time and research has been invested in those few words.

Family News

Life on the farm has never been better. We absolutely love living in a rural setting and waking up to the sound of chirping birds, barking dogs, and mooing cows from across the way. The city of Hardin, population approximately 500, remains the sleepy little town that I have always called home—a treasure chest of some of my fondest memories. Kim, Benjamin, and I speak often of how much we enjoy the slower lifestyle and the benefits of rural America. My parents, who live a mile and a half from us, along with Kim’s parents and family (who live in Marion, Illinois), enjoy their time here on the hill. I am very thankful for the unity that exists among all of us. It makes for a great time, especially during this special time of the year.

Benjamin’s passion for farming and the outdoors is obvious to all who know him. He will be eleven in a few days, and the 150 acres we live on serve him well in his pursuit of everything from snakes, to turkey, to deer—whatever he can find. He greatly enjoys riding tractors and combines with our friend, Keith Harris (and his son Jake), who plants and harvests our cropland. His room is filled with pictures of John Deere equipment, everything from tractors, to combines, to disks and plows—whatever is green and yellow. We are thankful for the friends the Lord has sent into his life, for he has a community of people who love Jesus, and who also love him, who are priceless. He is growing up to be quite a little man with a very sensitive heart (he got it from his momma). Not that he doesn’t have some rough edges, but overall he is a continual blessing that Kim and I wouldn’t swap for the world.

We have found a wonderful church (Heritage Bible Church) with a pastor (Kevin Gaunce) who possesses a heart of gold. My family greatly appreciates all whom we have come to know and love there. God is good.

Ministry News

The ministry here has been very encouraging over the years, basically due to one reason: We have had opportunity to invest our lives into people with passion. Therefore, the most important ministry news is what has taken place in the lives of those whom we have been privileged to teach, fellowship with, and enjoy. The most of you who will be receiving this newsletter have either been here to visit or have studied materials produced by this ministry. We are blessed beyond words to have known you and, at the same time, witness your love and compassion for the things of the Lord. We hear great things concerning how the Lord is using you, and as a result, “rejoice before our God on your account” (1 Thessalonians 3:9). You truly do “appear as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). We could never thank you enough for the stand you have made and can hardly wait to see how God uses you in the future.

The ministry is in a good place in that we now have the facilities to accommodate a variety of groups due to our increased capacity. This gives us flexibility, even to the point to where different groups can visit at the same time without interfering with one another. The majority of our time is invested in the production of materials for the training of the body of Christ, as well as teaching these materials to anyone and everyone who will listen. I am presently teaching through the book of Isaiah on Tuesday nights, and my notes from this study will be bound into a commentary as

soon we are finished. The study will take at least three more semesters and is very encouraging. Brandon Karstetter continues to work here on the hill and does a wonderful job filling orders for courses, tapes, CD's and MP3's. He does a variety of other things as well and we are blessed to have him with us.

A young man from Florence Alabama, Tom Berryman, attended our summer camp last summer as a graduating high school senior. He is presently a freshman at the University of Alabama, and he and some of his college buddies are coming up for a three day retreat the first part of January. It is situations of this sort that we greatly enjoy, investing time in young men with leadership qualities who truly have a heart for the truth coupled with a passion for the Person. The remainder of my life I plan on doing nothing other than train men and teach women who possess zeal for the things which matter. In other words, I have eliminated the word "retirement" from my vocabulary and have signed up for the duration.

Some Events to Consider Attending on the Hill

January 16, 2007 Tuesday night Bible study begins at 7:00 p.m. The book of Isaiah continued. **January 12-14, 2007** Winter youth retreat **April 13-15, 2007** Annual men's retreat for fathers, their sons, and single men of all ages. **July 8-14, 2007** Summer Camp for ages 13-18 **August 31-September 1, 2007** Two-day school. Topic: Romans 1-8. **October 19-21, 2007** Annual fall retreat for men and women, both single and married.

Speaking Engagements Off the Hill in the Near Future

February 9-11 Highland Baptist Church in Meridian, Mississippi March or April (TBA) The Church at Tatesbrook, Lexington, Ky. For more details concerning ministry information, you can go to our website at www.lifeonthehill.org.

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

I recently told a group of believers that truth is my most important possession—and I meant it. Truth reveals much about my best friend, who is invisible, His name being Jesus Christ. He is addressed in the Scriptures as Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), "Immanuel" meaning, "God with us." Did you hear that? Immanuel! Jesus, in other words, was the very presence of God on earth during His first coming. Therefore, He was, and is, God! Can you believe that as early as the fourth through the sixth centuries AD the church was filled with debate as to who Jesus was—was He, or was He not, God? Strange.

What then did Jesus, who is God, believe concerning the Scriptures? The only Scriptures available at that time were those of the Old Testament, so what did He train His disciples to believe concerning these books? Did He view them literally, to be interpreted literally by all, or

did He view them as nothing more than an allegory, a series of stories where the literal text is required to submit to a hidden meaning revealed to the select few? Let's go to the New Testament to answer our questions.

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus states, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." Obviously, He viewed His coming as a literal fulfillment of the Old Testament Law and Prophets.

Jesus' words of Matthew 26:56 confirm the same: "But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled."

Also consider Luke 18:31: "And He took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.'" No argument here as well. All literal.

It is impossible to deny what Jesus believed from Luke 24:27: "And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." Would it not have been interesting to have heard this sermon, a sermon that may very well have contained every reference to Jesus' Person in the entire Old Testament? No allegorical interpretation here—all literal, and Luke 4:16-22 is yet another example of the same.

Let's next consider how Jesus' disciples and other New Testament believers viewed and interpreted the Old Testament. Philip in John 1:45: Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Paul in Acts 28:23: "And when they had set a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening."

Peter's words of 1 Peter 1:10-11: "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow."

One cannot read Zacharias' words of Luke 1:67-73, Stephen's words of Acts 7:2-53, the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8:26-35, Peter's messages of Acts 3:11-26 and Acts 10:34-43, and Paul's words of Acts 13:13-27 and Acts 26:22-29 without concluding that they all viewed the Scriptures from a literal vantage point.

How then did we get off the beaten path and begin to view the Scriptures otherwise? If you have never heard the story, you will be shocked as to how we arrived at where we are today.

There was a Jewish philosopher named Philo who lived from 20 BC to 40 AD. His goal was to harmonize Greek philosophy with the Hebrew Scriptures by teaching that Greek philosophy was the same as the philosophy of Moses. In other words, acceptance of his ideas by the Greeks was the force behind his methodology rather than loyalty to the text. The only way he could do so was

to allegorize, or spiritualize away, the letter of the Scriptures. Origin (185 to 254 AD), the greatest scholar and author of the early church, adopted Philo's ideology. As a result, the church began interpreting the Scriptures from a totally different frame of reference, one which viewed the literal wording as nothing more than a veil covering the deeper, hidden, more spiritual ideal. This means that many within the body of Christ abandoned the manner in which Jesus and the disciples interpreted God's word and exchanged it for a philosophy which allowed only the "spiritually elite" to understand the true meaning of the text. This served as fertile soil for the leadership (quote, "clergy") of the church to eventually have the final say in all matters, leaving the, quote, "laymen," who were suddenly viewed as inadequate to understand God's word, at the mercy of the teacher. Even Augustine (354-430 AD) fell into this same trap, and consequently, those influenced by his teaching through the centuries have walked in his erroneous footsteps.

So how do you know if an individual interprets God's word literally or allegorically? The main indication, from my perspective at least, is how they view the church versus the nation of Israel. If they view Israel's presence in the holy land as irrelevant and unrelated to Biblical prophecy, and if they view the church as fulfilling all of God's unconditional promises made to the physical Jewish nation, they view the Scriptures allegorically. However, when viewing the Scriptures from a literal vantage point, there is a wealth of prophecy confirming the present Jewish state as one of the foundational truths of the Old Testament cannon. Obviously, objective proof trumps subjective presumption.

One parting thought. If one decides to cast away the literal meaning of the Scriptures and adopt the allegorical mindset, where does one draw a line in the sand. Was the virgin birth prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 to be interpreted literally or allegorically? It better be literally or we have no hope!

Walk on.

B.A.S.I.C. Training, P.O. Box 13 989 Hardin Wadesboro Rd. Hardin, Ky. 42048 Phone (270) 437-4172 contact@lifeonthehill.org