

James Hamilton
September/October 2017 Report

REJOICING IN THE BLESSINGS OF THE LORD

We praise the Lord and thank Him because He has truly blessed us with wonderful weather this year. If this is climate change, I will ask the Lord for more of it. I do not fear global warming. I know God has said that He has set the limits for the seas (Proverbs 8:29) so I do not fear the rising of the seas as some “scientists” claim will happen. We trust God and thank Him for the rain and the sun, the heat and the cold (Matt. 5:45).

More importantly, we have been blessed beyond measure with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). God has shown us mercy and grace in many ways, especially through the forgiveness of our many sins. He has proven His love for us beyond all doubt by giving His Son to die for us. We have a true purpose for living and the joy that comes by fulfilling that purpose. Citizenship in His kingdom is a great privilege, as is His love for us and our acceptance into His family. The association we enjoy strengthens us. Thank you for the fellowship we have in His work. The greatest blessing is to know the Lord, and we want everyone else to know Him, too.

BENTON

September was a great month for us at Hwy. 5. With the exception of our largest family, attendance was improved and reliable. We also had two new visitors because of the work of the members: Jack B., whom I met while teaching at The Manor just around the corner from my house, and Scott N., who is the son of one of sister Lucky’s friends that has also visited in the past. Scott has a background with the Worldwide Church of God (Herbert W. Armstrong), but he no longer holds to those beliefs. I began an individual study with him. We had several other visitors recently, besides the ones we had at our gospel meeting at the end of September with Zach Redmon.

Personal evangelism by the members contributed to us having a successful gospel meeting. We had at least twelve adults that were local visitors that were not members of the body (church) of Christ. Just on Tuesday evening, we had nine visitors who were not Christians. Several visitors came several times. Jack was not able to attend our gospel meeting because of his health, but I am studying with him at the Manor. He got three other people to start coming to the Tuesday morning study. The Briggs couple seems to be especially sharp in understanding what the Bible says. More cottages are nearly finished, so I hope that more people will be moving in and wanting to study.

Another important ingredient to our good meeting was the excellent preaching by Zach Redmon. One of our men (Mark B.) had often visited the church in Saratoga while visiting his family, and he enthusiastically urged us to have Zach come to preach our meeting at Hwy. 5. Zach had preached a few times already at Hwy. 5, and he always had given us good lessons. However, the gospel meeting proved that his growth as a preacher has been remarkable. I would gladly encourage any congregation to have Zach Redmon if they want to have a meeting that will challenge the members to make spiritual improvements in their lives as well as teach the truth to the lost in an effective manner.

Zach had excellent lessons on prayer at all services on Sunday. On Monday through Friday, he also taught several good lessons from these sermons: The Other Two Crosses at Calvary, Laying Up Treasures in Heaven, To The Parents of the Prodigals, Jacob’s Beautiful Wife, A Picture of Redemption (Ruth). All the lessons were recorded. The most requested lesson was Laying Up Treasures in Heaven. That lesson prompted some visitors to come for more lessons.

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The singing was also a very important part of our special week. We had a song service on Saturday before the meeting. We had fewer people than we had hoped, but we were encouraged by the participation of everyone who was there. Herb Matthews put together a good compilation of songs for us. He led most evenings for the gospel meeting and did a wonderful job making the worship edifying for everyone. Marvin Butler and Harold Thornhill also led singing during the meeting. We are thankful for the willingness and ability that each of these men has to lead us in our worship to God.

One family had some logistic problems, but the gospel meeting helped them get back on track. We have several members who are doing good things outside the church to glorify God. Our gospel meeting and assemblies have reinforced the good that the members are doing, and we are seeking to stir up more love and good works throughout the week.

We are making other attempts to draw closer together throughout the week. We have a Thursday morning study in 1 Timothy right now. This gives us an occasion to study and share what to do to spiritually help other members throughout the week. Several (as few as three and as many as ten) usually attend. Each Saturday we also meet together for breakfast, but have had to move to another location recently. We had a potluck get-together in the park on the afternoon of the Sunday that our gospel meeting began in order for Zach and his family to meet everyone and get to know them better. We have improved significantly in following this part of the pattern that we find for the disciples in the New Testament.

I have resumed study with two individuals by phone, since we do not have a convenient time to meet. This averages about one hour or more each week with Joey S. and thirty minutes every two weeks with Jeff H. Ellen studies with Sherry A. for about an hour every week, and she visits Mae L. for a couple hours each Wed. and Mildred P. for five or six hours twice a week to give her dead husband's former sister-in-law Peggy a break.

I have not heard back from the Dickerson family or Cari S. in several weeks after several attempts to reach them, so I am not studying with them at this time. Betty C. told me that she no longer wants to study with me.

The regular September and October studies were: Mildred P. (2 Chronicles), the Hicks family (Matthew), Scott N. (First Principles), Jason C. (Christian Living), Angela H. (First Principles), the Phillips family (Proverbs), Rhonda J. (First Principles), Richie (First Principles), Bertha J. (Psalms), David C. (First Principles), Joyce and Daryl M. (Revelation), The Manor (Matthew) and Thursday morning at Hwy. 5 (1 Timothy).

Besides the home studies listed above, my weekly work includes personal visitation, two sermons, teaching Psalms to the adult Bible class, writing bulletin articles, and working with Don McClain on the radio program of the 65th St. church two days per week.

FELLOW WORKERS

One of the visitors we had one Wednesday evening was Bill Holt from Chattanooga, TN. He knew my brother Tim Thompson, because they were both members at the Hixon congregation near Chattanooga. We really enjoyed having the Holts in Bible class that evening, and I went out to eat with them afterwards. I learned that he had been in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (when they were still

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Czechoslovakia) for the sake of the gospel, so we traded stories about both Florida College and evangelism in Eastern Europe. He told me that his son Joel is preaching in Puerto Rico.

Just a few days later, Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico and caused great devastation. Marvin B. and others were interested in helping brethren in need in that area. When Marvin called and told me the news he received concerning brethren in Puerto Rico, he asked if I knew Joel Holt. I said that I did not, but then I remembered that he is the son of Bill Holt who had visited the previous Wednesday. The church had given \$1500 to three churches in east Texas because of Hurricane Harvey and was prepared to help brethren in Florida when Hurricane Irma would hit. However, help was not needed there as much as it was needed in Puerto Rico, so we sent the church in San Juan \$1500.

In addition to this, Marvin stayed in contact with Joel about the needs of not only brethren there, but some of their non-Christian family members. Several members individually sent money and others pooled money together to send desperately-needed tarps and water filters that could not be bought in Puerto Rico. The greatest cost was shipping by Fed-Ex since the postal service was unreliable. We thank God for the opportunity to show our love for brethren and their friends whom we hope will become brethren by seeing disciples show love for one another (John 13:35, Acts 2:46-47).

Thank you for your support. Thanks to God for those of you who labor fervently in your prayers for us. Thanks be to Him for those of you who support us so we can live here and work full-time. And thanks to God for all the strength and encouragement that He provides through you. May He abundantly bless you!

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