



*5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. 6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. (Hab 3:5-6)*

Many readers may never have heard of this dignified and reverent hymn, but it is one of my favorites of all time. There are two hymns sung by the Cadet Glee Club at West Point which rank among my top ten favorite hymns – ‘*In the Mansions of the Lord*’ is one, and ‘*On Great Lone Hills*’ the other. The author of the lyrics is one who has his reward in Heaven for no one knows his name on earth. The musical score is taken from *Finlandia* by the Finnish composer, Jean Sibelius, written in 1899. The music itself is powerful and compelling and fits perfectly well with the magnitude and force of the lyrics.

Try, if you will, to imagine this great hymn being sung by the strong and youthful voices of the Cadet Glee Club accompanied by the powerful notes and strains of the music being played on the largest pipe organ in the world located in the Cadet Protestant Chapel at West Point. It is worth the time to go online and search out this great performance of the hymn under study.

### **On Great Lone Hills**

*On great, lone hills, where tempests brood and gather,  
Primeval Earth, against primeval sky,  
We, faring forth, possessed by fervent longing,  
Have found a throne, eternal and high,  
Have knelt at last in wordless adoration,  
Till fire and whirlwind have both gone by.*

*With ardent song we greet the golden morning.  
By faith upborne, remember not the night.  
The whole wide world, triumphant hails the dawning.  
God walks abroad in garments of might,  
The hills, behold, are now a path of splendor,  
Transfigured all, and all crowned with light.*

*On great, lone hills, where tempests brood and gather, Primeval Earth, against primeval sky, We, faring forth, possessed by fervent longing, Have found a throne, eternal and high, Have knelt at last in wordless adoration, Till fire and whirlwind have both gone by.* It is not in the ditches and gutters of society that great decisions are made, but in the halls of the Parliaments and Congresses. If man could learn the important lesson that those decisions made on High are forever the prevailing decisions by which his life is ordered, perhaps he might stumble less on the stones of failure and the ruts of ruin. God is alone in His Heaven. The Three Persons of the Triune Godhead constitute One Mind - for all who are agreed in perfection constitute One Mind. There are no other heights from which divine decrees are issued, but from these exalted heights of Heaven. The storms of the earth are conceived there on those Great Lone Hills of the Father's Mind. When the spiritual horizon is dark and brooding, you may be sure that a storm is brewing on High to rain on the debauchery and decadence of those who have long neglected the worship of their Maker.

Mr. Merriam Webster defines PRIMEVAL thusly: *"of or relating to the earliest ages (as of the world or human history): ancient, primitive."* Of course, the word itself is self-explanatory. Prime means the earliest or very first. Primeval relates to all first things and causes. God is the First Cause that existed in the eternity before even the primeval earth was made by His Hands. We fare forth as seaman on the sea of life, or as pilgrims crossing the wilderness of this world. We have a Chart and Compass to steer our course - the Holy Bible and the Holy Spirit. *14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.* (Heb 11:14-16) Are you, friend, seeking a heavenly country as a pilgrim tormented by the sins around you; or have you *"pitched your tent toward Sodom?"* Have you, as Abraham and his spiritual progeny, *"confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."* (Heb 11:13b) The interest of a spiritual pilgrim seeking that City of God is not a casual or complacent interest, it is one born of fervent longing and patient desire.

By and by, the pilgrim ends his journey, but not until he has found the source of his longing and desire - the Throne of God, His Sovereign and King. Just as the sinner will stand speechless before the Judgment Seat of God, the Godly pilgrim will also stand dumb before His Maker - not out of shame or fear, but out of boundless adoration and awe. The pilgrim shall endure the coming storms and fervent heat that is coming upon the earth in the last days because he is secure in the Ark that is his Defense - the Lord Jesus Christ!

I can just imagine in my memory the rapturous notes building to a crescendo in this last verse: *"With ardent song we greet the golden morning. By faith upborne, remember not the night. The whole wide world, triumphant hails the dawning. God walks abroad in garments of might, The hills, behold, are now a path of splendor, Transfigured all, and all crowned with light."* There were thunderous outbreaks of flooding waters both from the heavens and the Fountains of the Great Deep during the Deluge of Noah's Day. The whole earth was awash with the devastating waters of the flood. Those who were without the closed door of the Ark perished with the wild beast whose natures were more like their own. But one Spring Morning, on the first day of the month (Nisan), Noah and his company departed the Ark. This 1<sup>st</sup> day of Nisan was the Hebrew New Year and First Day of Spring. What a spring morning that was for Noah and his family. What a spring morning awaits all who eagerly anticipate the sounding of the trumpet as the sky is rolled back as a scroll. The brilliant Light of Christ shall herald the first day of Spring in Heaven for those who are the called and elect of God. The cold, somber days

of December and January are no longer remembered on the first day of spring. The beauty of the flora and forest, the music of the birds and turtle dove, resound in our ears as a choir from on High. No, we shall not remember those days of hard labor and misery of our pilgrimage for the glory of heaven shall overpower these musings.

A minister friend from Asia recently asked me to help him to understand, in English, one verse of Ephesians: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9Not of works, lest any man should boast.* (Eph 2:8-9) The prepositions were the bugger-bears that plagued him. He wondered if it would not be the same to say, *“By faith are ye saved through grace.”* Of course, that misses the point of this verse. Faith does not save us, but it is the means of our knowing and believing the grace that is made available to us through the redeeming death of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we are dying of thirst, it is not the finely crafted crystal glass that will save us, but rather the water that is in that glass. Grace is the WATER, and faith is the GLASS! That FAITH must be centered in the right truth as well. A glass of salt water will not save a famishing pilgrim. Faith must be centered on truth. That faith in the Redeemer is what bears us up and makes us forget the night of agony and deprivation.

Having been baptized with fervent fires wherein every unclean thing has been burned away, the whole earth rests in the peace that only God can make full and complete. God walks again in garments of Light and Might as He did in the Garden at Eden of our primeval parents. We shall no longer regard the hills as impediments, but sources of help and strength: *1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. 2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.* (Psalms 121:1-2)

The hills and mountains no longer are dark and brooding, but rather crowned with halos of light and splendor. The hills are literally crowned with light, and so will be every saint who finishes his pilgrimage without fail.