

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Nearer My God To Thee

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We have read these words and many times sung the hymn which is a staple in our song book. It was written by Sarah F. Adams, and the music was composed by Lowell Mason. The hymn was also played by the musician Wallace Hartley on the RMS Titanic as it foundered and sank in 1912 during a north Atlantic crossing on the ship's maiden voyage, so the story is told. Although a debate still rages over which song was the last played on the deck of the Titanic, we need to remember that Sarah Adams, and Lowell Mason, were the people who gave us this rich, vibrant, and classical hymn years before.

Sarah Adams was born in Essex England on February 22, 1805. She married and moved to London where she went to the Unitarian Independent Church of William Johnson Fox, and wrote twelve other hymns besides *Nearer my God to Thee*, for Mr Fox to publish in a song book called *Hymns and Anthems*.

Lowell Mason was born January 8, 1792 and was raised in Medfield Massachusetts. He was a well known and very accom-

plished composer and musician.

Wallace Hartley was born in East Lancashire England on June 2, 1878. He was a first rate violinist and went to work for the White Star line in 1909, and died the evening of April 14, 1912 when the Titanic went under. It is said he had wished the hymn, *Nearer my God to thee*, be played at his funeral giving credence to the last hymn played debate.

The title of this hymn should tell us, as Christians, all we need to know. Even in times of suffering, and especially in such times, our song can be, “*nearer my God to thee.*” As seasoned followers of the Lord, with a deeper, clearer understanding, we can look ahead to the future. Perhaps being in the twilight years of life and ever moving closer to the end of this life's time, buoyed with hope and anticipating the reward of Heaven, *still all my song shall be, nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee.*

When we read Psalms 23:1-6, *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul: He guideth me*

in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. We have the deep understanding that having obeyed the New Testament's initial requirements to become Christians, and having lived our lives according to the Lord's instructions, we will have our home in Heaven at the end of time.

Remember that the scriptures require us to join in the song service (*Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16*). Now, when we hear the soulful melody and the somber lyrics of this hymn, the meaning and intent of the writer will come to mind, and perhaps a thought or two for the 1500 souls that were lost on that cold night in April, 1912 in the north Atlantic. More importantly, may we live such lives in tune with our Lord's will, that we can truly say, “Nearer My God to Thee”