

SEEING THE LIGHT

“Thy light is come” Isaiah 60:1

A FAMOUS SONG

Most Americans know the name Hank Williams Jr. He was a singer/songwriter who left an enduring catalog of songs. Many musicians cite his song writing prowess and his music as a significant influence on them and their careers. His still lingering influence is remarkable considering the shortness of his life; he died age 29 in 1953, long before television was able to turn people into household names overnight. One of the songs he wrote was *‘I Saw the Light.’*

IT’S INSPIRATION

Despite the fact that Williams was a star and constantly in demand to give concerts, the era he travelled the country in came long before the days of private jets and large luxurious buses that popular musicians travel in today. After engagements, Williams and his band would tightly pack into a car, pulling a U-Haul type storage unit containing their instruments behind them, and endure often long trips over difficult roads to their next destination. It was grueling, but that was how they moved about. The inspiration for this song came to Williams during one of those long, uncomfortable, made more so for him because of his chronic back pain, car rides. They were approaching Montgomery, Alabama where he lived. His mother, a former church organist, was driving as she often did. In the nighttime sky, she observed the lights emanating from Dannelly Field Airport. She remarked to her sleepy son who was in the back seat, “I just saw the light.” She was indicating they were near Montgomery and therefore almost home. But to Williams it ignited another idea and spoke to him about something else besides his nearness to his bed.

IT’S MESSAGE

He wrote the first draft of the song he received the initial inspiration for at that moment on January 26, 1947. The famous lyrics of the song recount praise being offered to God because of the spiritual awakening of someone who previously had refused to let his dear Savior into his heart. But then, the song continues, after Jesus came to him like a stranger in the night, he saw the light and ended his aimless wandering through life, traded the wrong for the right, and as a result of seeing this light he was no more in darkness and now was happy having left sorrow behind. The song unashamedly identifies Jesus as the source of this light.

PRAISE FOR THE LIGHT

It is unclear if Mr. Williams ever let the dear Savior into his heart. Tragically and ironically, he died in the back of a car while travelling to another concert. His autopsy indicated a toxic mix of alcohol and drugs. But the song he left behind still rings out with truth. Jesus is the Light. And all of us who know him as Savior should sing out with praise in thanksgiving for the coming of the light.