SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER

Elder Lonnie Melashenko and the staff of the Voice of Prophecy gathered, by conference call, with Yvonne and I at a special time during the execution of Don Hawkins. At that same time, prayer groups did the same. We were in a state of mourning, though I had been sharing daily with Don. He was ready. In our last chat with him, Yvonne and I went through the steps he would experience prior to his rest. At 4:30, he would receive his last meal: Stuffed Crust Pizza. At 5:30 he was taken to shower, dress, and then to the death chamber where an IV was inserted in his arm.

He was given a chance to speak to those present. He lifted his head, found his wife, and said “I love you. The state has demanded justice with my body, and they have it. But my soul will be at peace with my Lord. Look for me at the feet of Jesus.” After one more “I love you,” he was asleep; and the execution procedure was completed.

On Calvary, Jesus claimed victory for Don, and we will see him on resurrection morning. He also claimed victory for all of us. Because of you, Someone Cares.

We have worked with thousands of convicts, but never have we met a person so full of remorse for what his life had been. Never have we met a man so regretful for the life taken.

Lonnie sent Don a letter and part of it follows:

I WISH WE COULD BE THERE

“Since I am unable to do so, I wish to reach you as a fellow servant of our Lord
Jesus Christ and express my personal love for you and assure you of my earnest prayers in your behalf that God will sustain you as you “walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” Like the Apostle Paul, you are a prisoner on Death Row. But God used Paul’s prison ministry to forever bless the world through the ongoing testimony of his prison epistles. My dear friend, please know that I am going to keep you in my thoughts and prayers. May Jesus keep your thoughts and attitudes close to His mind and heart. Hold tight to the promises of God’s Word.”

Lonnie is preparing for a world-wide Net 2003 TV program and for him to take the time to care and share put even more peace in Don’s heart. Rest in peace, our brother and spiritual son.

**GOD HAS A BETTER PLAN**

For Don and all of us. Even through the disappointments and vicissitudes of life, God always comes through. He can take the worst situation and turn it into a stunning victory in His final plan. The cross of Calvary and his own Son, Jesus Christ, is a classic example of turning defeat into victory. What appeared to be certain doom that Friday afternoon as Jesus died, in fact turned into the greatest victory celebration and resolution of the eternal plan of salvation! Praise God! IT’S FRIDAY, AND SUNDAY’S COMING!!

WHY ALL THE FUSS OVER A CRIMINAL? Yvonne and I and many others have been touched by Don for over 18 years. Don is why we do what we do, why we are called Someone Cares. Because we do. Don is a classic case of a cruel, bitter young man turned into a Child of God. There is victory in Jesus. Those of you who are members of The God Squad have experienced your own victories with your Pen Friends. Also, many have experienced defeat as there are those in prison on whom Satan has too tight a grip. We are told to never give up and we did not with Don. His last wish was that all of you who have given up on your Pen Friend, grab Jesus’ life line and throw it out again. If you have never experienced the chance, try it.

**A DEATH TURNED INTO A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE**

Several weeks ago, I asked Don 15 questions in a video interview. The answers are precious. We talked about God’s commission to the church and would love it if every pastor would show the video in church, to get members involved, and God’s church moving.

Don has also written two books.

We are going to try to make these available to all of you. Don’t ask me how, ask God.
SACRIFICIAL OFFERING

Don’s wife, a nurse, lost five jobs in McAlester because she was the wife of a Death Row inmate. God’s grace provided for Don’s funeral. His ashes will be put in a teddy bear that she can keep. She is moving back to Southern California and needs a job. If we can get the video produced, she can share in the profits. The income from the books will go to her.

YVONNE’S CORNER

To say that we have lost a true friend is an understatement. Don was like a member of the family as is his wife, Joelle, so please keep her in your prayers. We lost a great gospel worker when Don was laid to rest. One of the last things he said to me was, “Don’t forget the prisoner.”

There are different types of prisons: some may be prisoners in their own homes; others might feel like they are prisoners of their work. Paul puts it best in Acts 10:34, that God is no respecter of persons (KJV), or God shows no partiality (NKJV). We are all equal in the eyes of God, no matter who we are, no matter where we are. He died on that Old Rugged Cross for all of us and is willing forgive every one of us if we just ask. What a simple story to share with so many who don’t know the story of Salvation. I want to thank all of you who are a part of Someone Cares, and all who keep this ministry going. It is truly because of you that this ministry continues and also because there are more people like Don Hawkins who need to know they are forgiven! There is a person in a cell waiting to hear about Jesus from some-one, maybe even on McAlester’s Death Row. How about you becoming a Pen Friend?

JEAN’S JOTTINGS

When Someone Cares first asked me to write to Don Hawkins, it seemed a scary prospect. The first prison photo was even more so, for being caged in a window-less concrete room takes a huge toll on the faces and spirits of those behind the bars. And Don was “dressed” in tattoos.

God had given me this job on the newsletter; in fact, He gave me no rest until I’d pestered the McClures into accepting my offer. When He wants us to do something, God is very persistent, and they finally gave in. It’s been such a blessing to me to serve all of you.

In the 8+ years I knew him, Don was a blessing to me, as well. His letters made me dig into the Word. He was a “nephew” to be proud of, for his spiritual journey always amazed me.

As time went on, he gained a phone privilege schedule, and it was plain that this young man, who had been the “worst of the worst” had been plucked out of the fire by his Creator and Someone Cares, to become a gentle minister to a wide range of
people. Including me. In one of our last two conversations, he said that he was 43; his father died at 43; also his grandfather. I was able to give him the assurance that we’d see one another when Jesus comes for us, and we’d all meet in heaven, face to face for the first time, spending eternity rejoicing. He was joyful that his ordeal would be over at last.

He made lovely parting gifts for Yvonne and I, which we will always treasure.

As his time drew closer, his letters became ever more spiritual, indicating that he and his Lord were drawing closer to one another. Pen Friends in prison cells were praying for him; prayer groups around the world were interceding for him, which touched his heart.

Paul’s message in 2 Timothy

4:6-8 (NKJV) was also one Don could have sent to us:

6. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Ten Months to Live
(Last Installment)
by Don Hawkins

Even animals are called “souls” as living creatures. But they have no intellect of reason, worship, language, moral nature, conscience, nor will they face judgment, as will people who are created in the image of God. If the word “soul” is used for man and beast, then “immortal soul” as taught by popular preachers would equally apply to animals.

“That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; even one thing [death] befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preëminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21).

The last sentence sometimes misleads people. The KJV and RSV says who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirits of the beast goes down into the earth.” The NIV says “Who knows if...;” the Living Bible says “Who can prove...?” and Today’s English Version says “How can anyone be sure?”
All creatures, man and beast, go into the grave, not into some conscious after world. There he awaits the resurrection and judgment.

As for SPIRIT, the Greek word is Pneuma, from which we get pneumonia, a disease that obstructs breath or respiration. Also pneumatic, which refers to compressed air. God breathed the breath of life into Adam. He became a soul, or living, breathing person. The terms “spirit” and “breath” are synonymous.

“Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the fact of all the earth” (Psalm 104:30). “...Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust” (Psalm 104:29; see also Job 33:4, 34:14,15).

Our breath/spirit cannot exist apart from our body’s lungs.

“My breath is in me ... the Spirit of God is in my nostrils” (Job 27:3).

“The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7).

Solomon says this Spirit of Life (breath) returns to God from which it came (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The spirit that leaves the body is the breath of life and not the person. So when Jesus committed His spirit into the Father’s hands (Luke 23:46), He was giving up His breath of life which was given of God.

Spirit comes from the Latin spiritus while ghost comes from the German geist. When we die, we give up the ghost, or breathe our last. Light bulb, plus electric current, equals light. Dust, plus breath/spirit, equals life. Take away one and you have nether light nor life.

The Greeks were influenced by Plato, so Paul had to fight against the “wisdom of men” throughout his writings. Most of the immortal soul teachings about prior existence and existing in a place below after death, comes from Plato. God forbids spiritualism because it is demons/evil/familiar spirits that exist, and not your dead loved ones. Those beliefs are an abomination to the Lord.

Now as for the Rich Man and Lazarus, it is not difficult to see that it is only a parable and not a real place (Luke 16:19-31. The Bible never contradicts itself, so let’s consider whether this is a literal story about real men and actual events, or a parable to teach a moral lesson. Jesus taught moral lessons using literal things.

Are we literally the salt of the earth just because Jesus used this analogy? Jesus was speaking to a crowd and when addressing a crowd, He only used parables. “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables: and without a parable He spake not unto them” (Matthew 13:34). So for those who say the Rich Man and Lazarus is not a parable, I say let God be true and every man a liar, because it is clear that He only spoke to them in parables. This parable says nothing about immortal souls leaving the body at death. Instead, the Rich Man, after death, has eyes and a tongue that are body parts. He wanted Lazarus to dip his finger (a body part) into water. How much real water could a spirit finger apply to a spirit tongue? And what good are tongues, fingers and eyes to disembodied spirits? If the bodies
are in the graves awaiting resurrection, how can this be literal? Hell is not a
downstairs compartment of heaven.

Heaven cannot be a glorious place if you are subject to the cries of the suffering
dammed. What kind of heaven lets the redeemed see their unsaved family members
and friends across a gulf (especially in torment)? How can Abraham’s bosom be
large enough to actually carry Lazarus? How could he possibly carry all the saved?
Lazarus cried unto Abraham’s bosom and not unto God, where the dead saints are
supposed to be.

This parable was speaking to the Jews who carried an Egyptian belief with them out
of Egypt after captivity there. Abraham’s bosom is not found anywhere else in
scripture, but is a contemporary Jewish belief, says the historian Josephus. In whose
bosom does Abraham rest?

The prayer to another human: “Father Abraham, have mercy on me,” constitutes
worship of saints and is error. Abraham is dead, so he cannot hear, nor can he know
anything, if scripture bears out truth. If this story is literally true, then all other
Bible texts about death are false. The Bible says trees talked to each other (Judges
9:7-15), but no one believes it to have been literal.

Jesus spoke five parables in a row, ending with the Rich Man and Lazarus. The
Prodigal Son is not labeled as a parable, so do we take it literally? The parable of
the Rich Man and Lazarus is out of timing sequence. How could the Rich Man and
Lazarus have received their just rewards when the Bible says these, along with
judgment, are future? According to the book of Hebrews, Abraham and the other
patriarchs will receive a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35) because of their faith.
None had received it yet (verse 40; see also Isaiah 26:19).

The name Lazarus was a common name of that period, much like Mike or Ron is
today. The name was used only to identify a difference between more than one
person.

So now let’s examine the Thief on the Cross, since it is used to show “instant death,
instant glory” by those who teach such.

“He said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And
Jesus said unto him, ‘Verily I say unto thee, today thou shall be with me in

The punctuation used in the Greek is not inspired by God. Changing a comma can
make the difference in the meaning. Since there was no punctuation used in the
Greek text, it is best to read in context what something means. So instead of placing
the comma after “thee,” place it after “today” and it says “Verily I say unto thee
today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.” Today is an indicator of time, telling us
when the conversation took place. Paradise is a place in the Third Heaven where
God’s throne is (2 Corinthians 12:2-4; Revelation 2:7).

Jesus told the woman three days later not to touch Him for He had “not yet
ascended to my Father” (John 20:17). We know from scripture that Paradise is where His Father is. The thief knew that Jesus would come into His eternal kingdom at the end of time, and asked Jesus to remember him when He did come into His kingdom and restored the earth to the Eden paradise atmosphere. Jesus is simply saying, “I’m telling you today that you will be with Me when I do.” It’s all a matter of a misplaced comma and not a contradiction to other scripture.

So when did Jesus go and preach to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:18-20)? Was this while Jesus was in the grave? Was it through Noah preaching to the rest as he built the ark? “By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” Christ preached “while the ark was preparing,” and not “thousands of years later in hell.” For 120 years, God preached to spirits, or the living beings, through Noah.

Peter did not say He preached to the dead, but them He preached to are now dead. There are no second chances for the wicked dead, so why would Christ preach to them? Christ preached to them through Noah while they were alive, as the ark was preparing. “Spirits” does not refer to disembodied spirits of the dead.

Moses called God “The God of the spirits of all flesh” (Numbers 27:15-17). The “prison house” here refers to the “prison house of death,” or “prison house of sin.” Sometimes “spirit” is used as an expression of “part of the whole;” like telling someone they are “wearing nice threads.”

Paul used it as part of the whole in saying “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, Amen” (Galations 6:18; 2 Timothy 4:22) Philippians 4:23 shows that the “spirit” means “you.”

Jesus said “I am He that liveth and was dead” (Revelation 1:18), so He wasn’t preaching while He was dead in the grave. We do not go to Jesus at death. He comes for us at an appointed time that only the Father knows.

There are not contextual scriptures to show a silent, secret rapture of the church. It’s a loud, triumphant shout and trumpet blast at the second coming, when the sleeping dead are awakened to life, and the remaining saints who were already alive, are caught up to meet Christ coming for us as He said He would, to welcome us into heaven. Do not be deceived by doctrines of seducing spirits or devils (1 Timothy 4:1). Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2,3).

That’s all I want to say about this matter, and it shows why I believe as I do.

Friends, you may not agree with everything you have read these past few months from the pen of this young man, but study these things for yourselves. Study the whole Bible for yourselves, with a concordance, to prove what is true and what is not. Our Pen Friends belong to many different faiths, and Jesus said He had other sheep who were not of “this fold.” Ask Him in prayer to guide you as you study,
and He will show you marvelous things.

Someone Cares Home Page