

Hymns To 'Think - Again' Before You Choose

Jerusalem

The words "And did those feet in ancient times walk upon England's mountains green?" are a poem by William Blake. The poem obviously means Jesus' feet (it goes on to say the "countenance divine", and "the holy Lamb of God"), and it is basically asking 'didn't Jesus come and visit England?' The answer, of course, is - no, he didn't. Jesus lived and died in Palestine.

The poem is based on an old non-Christian idea that Jesus didn't really die on the cross, but rather he was revived and then secretly smuggled out of Palestine by an inner circle of disciples. Once recovered he embarked on a worldwide preaching mission, during which he came to England and toured our green mountains and pleasant pastures.

However, the bible is completely against this idea: the whole point of the gospel is Jesus' death for mankind to take away the penalty of our sin - if Jesus hadn't really died then there would be no message for him to take on a worldwide preaching mission. It is quite clear from the gospels that Jesus expected to die in Jerusalem, and that his disciples believed that he had not just been revived from unconsciousness but resurrected from the dead.

It is true that the poem has been sung in churches in the past, and a lot of people like the tune very much. But nowadays we think it is important to sing words which are true, and for that reason, although Blake was a great poet, we don't like to sing this poem in our services. However, there is another hymn to the same tune which we do sing: all about Jesus' ascension and him sending the Holy Spirit to us: "Lord, may we see your hands and side." They are also lovely words for a wedding!

Lord may we see your hands and side
Touch you and feel your presence near.
Lord could our eyes behold these clouds
And watch you rising disappear.
Help us to pray for your return
To watch until you come to reign
And be your witnesses through the world
To speak and glorify your name.

Lord unto you we lift our eyes
Help us to live as you desire.
Bring down upon us power to win
Through tongues of Holy Spirit fire.
Lord breathe upon us to receive
The grace and love your Spirit gives
And may we know you with us now
Because in us your Spirit lives.