*I’ve Seen Home (And This Ain’t It)*

Jim Deason
I grew up in Walker County, Alabama in the 1950's and ‘60's.  It was in a valley about 1-2 miles long, running east and west, nestled between two hillsides.  It was a beautiful place, much smaller than but not a lot unlike Cades Cove in East Tennessee (at least in the mind of a child). The fields were fertile and the Bermuda grass pastureland where the Black Angus cattle were raised was deep and thick. The Mt. Hope church building, where I attended as a child, was just a short distance from the house. Not a lot of folk there, but they were “salt of the earth” people. In that valley, a young boy found the nourishment he needed to grow both physically and spiritually, but it wasn’t to last.

I was only about 10 or 11 years old when the first open coal mine appeared. One by one the farms and the fields disappeared under mounds of dirt and rock.  The old church building mentioned earlier was rendered uninhabitable by rocks which came through the roof, caused by pit blasts far to near. One by one, many of the people who made that valley home were forced to move out. I moved to Birmingham, got married, and the rest of that story is history.

From time to time, I’ve gone back to survey the damage and remember and, honestly, it makes me want to cry.  You see, I’ve seen and remember home — and that ain’t it.  There’s just no resemblance between the place I grew up and what it is now. And just calling all that to mind causes me to ponder.

**I’ve Seen Home**

You see, through the eye of faith I’ve seen my real home.  God tells you and me about it in His word.  It is a place that flesh and blood cannot inherit ([1 Cor. 15:50-53](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Cor.%2015.50-53)) where we will have new, immortal, bodies like that of the Lord (cf. [1 Jn. 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20John.%203.1)).  Peter describes it as an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and one that will not fade away ([1 Pet. 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Pet.%201.4)).  It is a place of eternal life ([Jn 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John%203.16)) that Jesus promised to prepare so that we can be with Him ([Jn. 14:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/John.%2014.1-3)). The throne of God is there and myriads of angels ([Rev. 4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rev.%204-5)).  The renowned faithful of all the ages will be there — Moses, Abraham, Paul and Peter.  There’s going to be people like you and me there too — surely some you know — people whose names neither sacred writ nor the history books of men record but whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

Paul knew that after life’s final breath this reward awaited him ([2 Tim. 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Tim.%204.8)).  He looked forward to the moment when He could “depart and be with Christ” ([Phil. 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Phil.%201.23)) where, once there, he would be “at home with the Lord” ([2 Cor. 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Cor.%205.8)).

**This Ain’t It**

I’ve seen home, and this world ain’t it (Dear Mrs. Snow, please pardon my incorrect English for sake of emphasis?).  The “world”, consists of the “lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life”([1 Jn. 2:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20John.%202.15-17%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)).  These are the “thorns” of this life — worries, riches, and pleasures — things that strangle spirituality and become a stone of stumbling to us as we seek to serve Jesus ([Lk. 8:14](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Luke.%208.14)).  Examples are found throughout Scripture.

The “lust of the flesh.”  The very first sin in the Bible started when Eve “saw that the tree was good for food” ([Gen. 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gen.%203.6)).  The Sodomites “... burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts” and God said that “those who practice such things are worthy of death.”  God burned the city to the ground ([Gen. 19:5](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gen.%2019.5),[24](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gen%2019.24); cf. [Rom. 1:27](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom.%201.27),[32](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Rom%201.32)). And don’t forget David, who burned in his lust for Bathsheba ([2 Sam. 11:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Sam.%2011.2-4)).  David’s son reminded us, “The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; He who would destroy himself does it. Wounds and disgrace he will find, And his reproach will not be blotted out” ([Pro. 6:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Prov.%206.32-33)). Too bad he didn’t heed his own wise words ([1 Kgs. 11:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Kings.%2011.1-4)). Such is the lust of the flesh, and in whatever form it takes it has been the downfall of many men and women.

The “lust of the eyes.”  Eve saw that the forbidden fruit was “a delight to the eyes” ([Gen. 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gen.%203.6)). She may have been the first but she certainly is not the only person to have been taken in by what they saw or what they were attracted to.  Lot “lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan... Sodom and Gomorrah... like the garden of the Lord” ([Gn 13:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gen%2013.10%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)).  He pitched his tent toward, moved into, set in Sodom’s gates, and lost his family as the result of his choices.  Space won’t allow me to speak of Achan ([Josh. 7:21](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Josh.%207.21)), Ahab ([1 Kgs. 21](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Kings.%2021)), and many others, but such is the lust of the eyes and the sin to which it leads.

The “boastful pride of life.”  Consider the building of the tower of Babel ([Gen. 11:4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gen.%2011.4)). The people wanted to wanted to “build a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and... make for ourselves a name... ([Gen. 11:4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Gen.%2011.4)). God intervened to stop such arrogance and scatter the people. King Uzziah was only sixteen years old when he became king. God helped him, strengthened him, and made him famous.  Militarily he was without a peer.  But, “when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God...” ([2 Chr. 12:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Chron.%2012.16)).  Nebuchadnezzar boasted, “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty” ([Dan 4:30](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Dan%204.30)).  God responded by removing him from the throne, sending him into the fields to eat grass like cattle, “until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes” ([Dan. 4:32](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Dan.%204.32)).  And don’t forget the proud Pharisee ([Lk. 18:11](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Luke.%2018.11)).  The vital lesson we learn is that, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling” ([Pro. 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Prov.%2016.18)).

This is the “world” of which John said, if you love it, you can’t love the Father.  James warned that, “...friendship with the world is hostility toward God. Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” ([Jas. 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/James.%204.4)).

**Who Are We?**

You and I need to always keep in mind that we are “aliens and strangers” in this world ([1 Pet. 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Pet.%202.11)).  These two words mean nearly the same thing. The first carries with it the idea of “one who lives in a place without the right of citizenship” (Logos). The second involves “a person who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there with the natives temporarily” (Logos).  Three vital lessons are found here.

1. We don’t belong here.  God created us — and then in Jesus He re-created us — for something different, something better: eternal fellowship with Him.  As long as we stay in this life, we’ll never be citizens of this world, but of heaven ([Phil. 3:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Phil.%203.20-21)).

2. We are transients here, temporary, just passing through. Our real home is in heaven, where the Lord is ([2Co 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Cor%205.8)).  We don’t need to form any attachments to this world that will hinder us from going home when that time comes.

3. While here, we are going to be different from the world around us. People will see it in us — in the way we talk, how we act, what we wear, and where we go ([2 Cor. 6:14-7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Cor.%206.14-7.1))— and they will treat us differently ([1 Pet. 4:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Pet.%204.1-4)).  Don’t fight it.  Embrace it!

**One More Thing!**

We sometimes sing, “This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through; My treasured are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue.”  It’s a beautiful song with a powerful message, but is it true of you? Is it possible that sometimes you act more like a citizen of this world than a citizen of heaven?

One day this world and all it contains will be destroyed in a ball of blazing fire ([2 Pet. 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Pet.%203.10)).  Time as we know it will end.  Then comes that inevitable interview with God ([2 Cor. 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/2%20Cor.%205.10)). You can’t avoid it.  You can’t run from it. You can’t let someone stand in your place. You can’t hide the things you have done, nor the things you have said ([Heb. 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Heb.%204.13)).  What will the judge of all the earth say to you?

Sometimes I’ve wondered, as I return to survey those rock pits in Walker County, if in His providence God didn’t do that on purpose, i.e., destroy my earthly “home.” Had it not happened, I don’t know what I would be, where I would be, or what I would be doing. I can picture myself being drawn back there, were it still the same, and that’s probably not a good thing. Maybe it is good that it was destroyed because I will tell you, I still have a strong desire for home — just not the one at Route 3, Box 50, Parrish, AL.  I’ve seen home, and this ain’t it!