

“DADDY, WHAT IS IT LIKE TO DIE?”

The late John Lyttle buried four of his own children (three little boys and a thirty-seven year old daughter.) The poem below, in memory of his son James Douglas Lyttle, inspired Don Earl Boatman to publish his fifth source book for preachers and Christian workers, *OUT OF MY TREASURE, VOL. V*.

Jamie Douglas died of leukemia on Nov. 16, 1961, just five days before his third birthday. In the agony of his passing John Lyttle wrote:

‘Twas night and we sat on the door step, just me and my of boy of three,
And we talked of the night and the dark and the stars, ‘course mostly the talker was me.
For I was far older and wiser and I knew things he couldn’t yet know,
And he listened with childish amazement, what Daddy said had to be so.
Then I pointed my hand up to heaven, and said, “See them shining so far
For tonight they all know that a Daddy, will be showing his boy each star.

And tonight - as I set on the door step, just me - there’s no boy of three.
And I look at the night and the dark and the stars, and I cry. ‘Cause he’s taken from me.
And someone far older and wiser, Who sees things that I cannot see,
looks down on his child in bereavement and with Him is a boy of three.
And I fancy my boy up in heaven, says, “Now wipe that tear from your eye,
For tonight I am showing my Daddy to each star up here in the sky.”

A short while before John’s own death, I traveled to Sullivan, Indiana to spend a couple of days at his feet. His lungs were failing and he was on oxygen twenty four hours a day. As we reminisced of days gone by, he told me of the man who was asked by his child, “Daddy, what is it like to die?” The wise father explained it like this: “Do you remember the other night when you fell asleep down stairs on the floor? Daddy found you there and took off your dirty old clothes and put clean ‘jammies’ on you. He picked you up in his arms and carried you upstairs. When you woke up it was morning and you were rested, safe and clean. You were in your own bed and in your own room. Honey, that’s what death is like for the child of God.”

How sad that many “more mature” people cannot accept such simplicity. Not only are we confused about death, we are not even 100% certain about sleep. Compton’s Interactive Encyclopedia laments that sleep is “difficult to define scientifically because it is so complex.” The little child, however, is not confused by such complexity. They know what it is to sleep, and they know what it is to wake up. Consequently, they can have insight on what it means to die, and yet live again.

Jesus said to His disciples: **“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep” (John 11:11.)** Little children may have understood Jesus before His disciples did. This is why Jesus told them that they had to be converted and become like little children in order to enter into His Kingdom (Matt. 18:3.) Jesus once told of a rich man who died and went to a place of torment. The poor soul cried out in agony for Abraham to send someone to his family and explain the reality of judgment. He reasoned that if someone came back from the dead, his brothers would believe. He was wrong! Jesus said: **“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Lk. 16:31.)**

What about you? Will you believe because someone has risen from the dead?