

HEAVEN (A PILGRIM SONG)

Genevieve Glen, OSB

Beyond the desert ways we walk
with hearts grown parched and dry.
A stream of crystal water flows
from Christ, enthroned on high,
to strengthen us who seek to go
where none will ever die.

Beyond the streets starvation prowls
among the living dead,
'neath trees that bear the fruit of life
a splendid feast is spread.
There Christ, the host, seats all who come
and ev'ry hunger's fed.

Beyond these shadowed valley roads,
beyond the reach of night,
a beacon stands upon a hill:
a city bathed in light
where burns God's living flame of love,
Christ Jesus, blazing bright.

The far horizon beckons us
toward distant break of day
where roads will end and journeys cease
as darkness creeps away
and we rejoice to hear the Voice
that bids us in to stay.

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Revelation 21:1–4, 9–27 • Isaiah 25:6–8

Beyond the far horizon where time comes to an end, the human mind quite simply cannot go. We cannot even begin to imagine life where time is not. And yet we wonder because the future toward which we travel shapes many of our choices now, even if journey's end takes us into a reality where the words "past, present and future" have no meaning. So we resort to images, some more appealing than others. Not surprisingly, the God who brought time into being at the very beginning of things offers us some very beautiful images in the Scriptures. Prophets like Isaiah paint for us pictures of a mountain scene where peace and plenty reign. In Isaiah 25, we find the great banquet to which Jesus seems to allude in parable and which the Book of Revelation translates into the wedding feast of the Lamb. The Book of Revelation itself concludes with the loveliest of images of the place toward which we are called to travel: the new city of Jerusalem on the mountaintop. The city needs no sun or moon. It is lit by the presence of the God who burned in the bush Moses saw and in Jesus at the Transfiguration. Down from the divine throne at the heart of the city runs a river on whose banks grow fruit-bearing trees of life. Wherever the river runs, living things flourish. In the city all tears will be wiped away, and suffering and death will be no more. Who wouldn't want to go there? The hymn text does a riff on the biblical images, contrasting present darkness, thirst, hunger, wounds and death with the city where Christ awaits us at journey's end.

The hymn is a pilgrim song. It offers us heaven in images, as the Bible does, to encourage those of us still on the road to persevere toward that great unknown "beyond the far horizon."

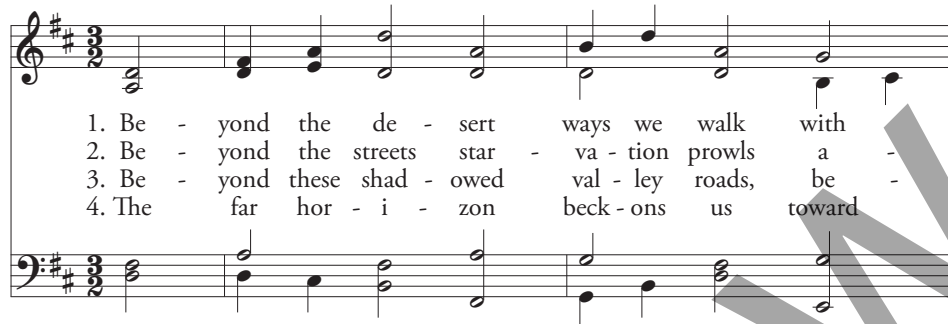
Use: Comfort, Discipleship, Eternal Life/Heaven, Funerals



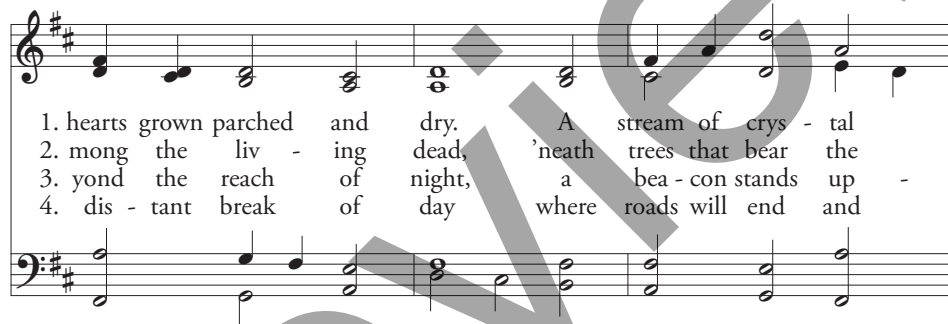
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BROTHER JAMES' AIR



1. Be - yond the de - sert ways we walk with
2. Be - yond the streets star - va - tion prowls a -
3. Be - yond these shad - owed val - ley roads, be -
4. The far hor - i - zon beck - ons us toward



1. hearts grown parched and dry. A stream of crys - tal
2. mong the liv - ing dead, 'neath trees that bear the
3. yond the reach of night, a bea - con stands up -
4. dis - tant break of day where roads will end and



1. wa - ter flows from Christ, en - throned on high, to
2. fruit of life a splen - did feast is spread. There
3. on a hill: a cit - y bathed in light where
4. jour - neys cease as dark - ness creeps a - way and



HEAVEN (A PILGRIM SONG), cont. (2)

1. strength - en us who seek to go where
2. Christ, the host, seats all who come and
3. burns God's liv - ing flame of love, Christ
4. we re - joice to hear the Voice that

1. none will ev - er die.
2. ev - 'ry hun - ger's fed.
3. Je - sus, blaz - ing bright.
4. bids us in to stay.

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Music: BROTHER JAMES' AIR; J.L. MacBeth Bain, ca. 1840–1925; keyboard acc. by Randall DeBruyn, b. 1947.

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