

ORIGIN OF "JESUS, BLESSED JESUS"

From the *Bits and Pieces* series(#325) By Elder Ralph Harris

Over the years quite a number of people have asked me to relate my experience in writing the song, "Jesus, Blessed Jesus." Possibly a greater number have related to me *their* experience in hearing it for the first time and the profound effect it had upon them. Due to the unusual manner in which the words came to me there is a sense in which I am not surprised that others have felt something special as they heard them sung. Usually, as I hear this song rendered by a congregation of God's people, I am struck with a feeling as though it was written by someone else. And, indeed, if it was given by the Spirit's direction, and under His influence, I was merely the instrument in penning it down. The experience is as follows:

On the third weekend in April, 1974, we attended the annual meeting of Mars Hill Primitive Baptist Church, near Edison, Georgia. This meeting began on Thursday night and continued through Sunday. On Friday afternoon after services I felt much in need of rest, and went into a cabin connected to my mother-in-law's house to lay down. I was not at all in a spiritual frame of mind and had entertained no other thought than getting some much-needed rest. I took off my outer clothes, turned down the covers, and sat down on the bed. But as I started to lay my head on the pillow the words, *Jesus, Blessed Jesus*, came into my mind with much force and feeling, and I experienced a powerful impression to rise up and write. Words began to flow into my mind, most of which came to me almost faster than I could pen them down, and I felt much joy while writing the thoughts that came to me at that time. I shed many tears of rejoicing in that short period *and never did lie down*. I put my clothes back on and began to read my Bible, for I felt fully rested and renewed in strength. This was one of the sweetest seasons of communion with my Lord that I have ever experienced.

That night we went back to the church and entered into the communion service. I felt a strong impression to read the poetry I had written that afternoon. As I read I was filled with emotion, and many tears were shed throughout the congregation. After the service was dismissed many expressed their appreciation for my having shared these words with them. The poem was published the next month in *The Christian Baptist*, and shortly after that I received a cassette tape from a Brother and Sister Maxwell, of Pelham, Georgia, who had recorded it to the tune of "Precious Memories". Then close to three years later I learned through Elder T. L. Webb, Jr., of Milan, Tennessee, that some of the churches in his area were singing it to the same tune in their worship services. It was then I concluded that if the brethren were going to use it in their churches, it ought to have a tune of its own, so I sat down at the piano and composed the tune that appears in the No. 11 *Old School Hymnal*, page 513.

I have felt humbly grateful to God for the joy I received in writing the poetry and music to this song, and have been deeply moved by the reception it has met with among His beloved people. It has afforded me even greater evidence that He was in the matter. Oh, what condescending mercy He extends when He blesses us with such precious tokens of His love! How devoted we ought to be to His worship and service! ---Elder Ralph Harris