



The Good News

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“When the Man Comes Around”

By Michael McCleary

*“There's a man going around taking names
And He decides who to free and who to blame
Everybody won't be treated all the same
There'll be a golden ladder reaching down
When the Man comes around*

*The hairs on your arm will stand up
At the terror in each sip and in each sup
Will you partake of that last offered cup?
Or disappear into the potter's ground
When the Man comes around”*

n Johnny Cash

The above excerpt is from one of the last songs that Johnny Cash ever wrote, called “When the Man comes around”. The full song contains numerous Biblical references, particularly from Revelation, but the above two stanzas are of particular interest. Johnny Cash was not known as a “holy” man and his life was certainly not one worthy of emulation, but it seems that in his final years he became much more “spiritual” than at any other time of his life. I believe that the message of the song is truly relevant in today’s society as so many people tend to ignore “...*the words long written down.*” Let us consider how Johnny saw it and seek out God’s words to determine if Johnny saw it right.

“Everybody won't be treated all the same” – We know that everyone will be held to the same standard, which is the Law of Christ. **James** says in **2:12** “*So speak and so do as*

those who will be judged by the law of liberty.” We know that only those who “...*do the will of My Father in Heaven...*” will be allowed in the Kingdom on the Judgment Day (Matt. 7:21). But I believe that Johnny is referring to the judgment itself, the consequences of what each person has done. In **John 5:29** Jesus says “...*those who have done good, [will come forth] to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, [will come forth] to the resurrection of condemnation.*” In fact, we find that not everyone will be treated all the same when the sentences are proclaimed.

“The hairs on your arm will stand up – at the terror in each sip and in each sup” – Paul says in **II Cor. 5:10-11**, “*For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;*”

We live in a world that wants to believe in a God that will save all souls, that will “treat everyone all the same”, but the truth is that Judgment Day is to be feared unless we are living according to the Law of Christ. Do we “know” the terror of the Lord? Are we prepared to face it? Johnny Cash took some poetic license in his song, but he had the principle down pat: there will be a lot of terrified people “*when the Man comes around*”. Will we be one of them?