



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

Program 5 – "Spirit In The Sky" © 1969 Norman Greenbaum 10/30/07

Norman Greenbaum, challenged himself to write a gospel song after watching country performer Porter Wagoner sing one on TV, then penned the lyrics to the blockbuster hit "Spirit In The Sky" in just 15 minutes. Greenbaum, who identifies himself as Jewish, has stated he had no particular religious intentions with the song, but referenced Jesus and Christianity several places in the lyrics in an effort to reach a bigger market (source: Wikipedia). While some of his theology misses the mark, much of it hits the target squarely. This song reached #3 on the charts in 1970 during the height of the "Jesus Movement" and in the world context of the Viet Nam war. It has been recorded by several artists, including the Christian group DC Talk. Its message and music still resonate within hungry hearts today.

When I die and they lay me to rest
Gonna go to the place that's the best
When I lay me down to die
Goin' up to the spirit in the sky
Goin' up to the spirit in the sky
That's where I'm gonna go when I die
When I die and they lay me to rest
Gonna go to the place that's the best

- Mindful of our mortality and an afterlife
- Recognizes there is more than one place awaiting when one dies
- *"If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." -- Rev. 20:15 NIV.*
Eternal separation from God
- Expresses assurance that he will go to the "best place" when his time comes
- *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." -- I John 5:13 NIV*

Prepare yourself you know it's a must
Gotta have a friend in Jesus
So you know that when you die
He's gonna recommend you
To the spirit in the sky
Gonna recommend you
To the spirit in the sky
That's where you're gonna go when you die
When you die and they lay you to rest
You're gonna go to the place that's the best

- Boy Scout motto – "Be prepared"
- Not a friend in Buddha, Confucius, or Dr. Moon
- *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends..." -- John 15:13-15 NIV*
- Jesus is our advocate – the only One in a position to "recommend us" to God the Father
- *"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." -- I John 2:1 NIV*

Never been a sinner I never sinned
I got a friend in Jesus
So you know that when I die
He's gonna set me up with
The spirit in the sky
Oh set me up with the spirit in the sky
That's where I'm gonna go when I die
When I die and they lay me to rest
I'm gonna go to the place that's the best
Go to the place that's the best

- Here's where the song's theology hops the track. The fact is, the Bible says we've all sinned – something we must understand before we can even recognize our need for a Savior
- "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." -- Romans 3:23 NIV
- "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." – Romans 5:8 NIV
- Do I stop sinning when I become a Christian? No, but we need to confess our sin to Jesus.
- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." – 1 John 1:9 NIV
- Then, when God the Father looks at us who have been saved through faith and trust in Jesus, He doesn't see our sin... He sees only the cloak of Jesus' righteousness that covers us.

Final thoughts...

The apostle Paul's attitude toward spreading the gospel might surprise some folks. In the letter to the Philippians, Paul notes that some were preaching the gospel for reasons other than to reach the lost.

15 "It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

Then, Paul says,

18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice." – Philippians 1:15-18

In "Spirit In The Sky", God used a Jewish fellow with no Christian background – a fellow who merely wanted to write a gospel song and market it to a wide audience – to "preach Christ". I think the apostle Paul would say, "Great job, Norman!".