

## GRANT COUNTY CHURCH OF CHRIST

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### THE SEASONS OF LIFE

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On my trip to Stanton, KY last week I met several people who were traveling to Natural Bridge State Park to view the colorful changing of the leaves. The uniformity and steadfastness of God's creation is amazing. Every year that we live on Earth has a Spring, a Summer, a Fall and a Winter! This is not accidental but is by design. *"While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat,*

*Winter and summer, And day and night, Shall not cease"* (Gen. 8:22).

The lessons we learn from the seasons are many and varied. **First**, there is the comparison of the seasons to our physical lives. Spring is like the time of birth. Summer is as the care-free days of childhood. Autumn reminds us of the colorful days of young adulthood. Winter is like the senior years when the hair is gray and life nears its end. The cycle is never-ending as long as the earth remains.

For example, in winter there are no leaves, very little daylight, cold temperatures, and very little greenery. But, just about the time winter becomes almost unbearable, the cold, colorless, lifeless earth is suddenly brought to life by the greenery of spring! For the faithful child of God this is a metaphor of the end of life on earth and the beginning of the new life, eventually, in a beautiful place called Heaven!

**The Second** lesson from nature is a lesson from snow. When the cold, dark short days of winter become hard to bear, the earth is suddenly covered by a white, pure and beautiful blanket of snow. Snow is beautiful at first but, it soon becomes riddled with tracks & mixed with mud, and when the weather warms up a little it becomes slush.

Similar to this, Babies are born pure and innocent and as guiltless as new-fallen snow (Ezek.18:20). The care-free days of childhood are days of spiritual safety (Matt.18:1-5;19:13-15). However, with Young Adulthood comes sin and spiritual death (Rom.3:23;6:23; Rev.21:8). But then, when one obeys the gospel, the blood of Jesus covers the filth, and the lifeless spirit, and where death and darkness once

reigned inside of this person, purity, guiltlessness, and light now cover his spirit like a blanket of new fallen snow (Rev.7:13-14)!

This renewal is available for all of us today! Notice the words of Isaiah: *"Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* (Isaiah 1:18).

The invitation is ever open for all to become as pure as the new-fallen snow!

## "Father Divine" Died

(Excerpts from an article by Wayne Jackson, Christian Courier, Sept. 1965)

George Baker; popularly known as 'Father Divine' was worshipped as God by millions of people. When asked about the place of his birth, "Divine" said, *"Before Abraham was, I am"* (He was actually born in an African American ghetto of Rockville, Maryland in 1879). By the early 1920's (after being influenced by a preacher named Samuel Morris who called himself "Father Jehovia"), he was claiming, "I am the Father Eternal, I AM GOD." His movement (known as the International Peace Mission) snowballed into a multi-million dollar enterprise, estimated (in 1965) as being worth about ten million dollars.

The followers of George Baker were thoroughly convinced that he was God and as such could never die. On September 10, 1965, "Father Divine" died!

Now this impersonator of God, who once wore tailor-made suits and drove a shiny Cadillac, will stand before the real God and give an account for his blasphemous life.

**(Note:** *This interesting article was written by brother Wayne Jackson in 1965. When I discovered the article, I became curious to learn more about the imposter who called himself "Father Divine" and about what has become of the cult of which he was the head when he died 45 years ago. Following is what I found JWC).*

His real name was George Baker, but around 1907 he changed it to **“Reverend Major Jealous Divine”**. He founded the **International Peace Mission** movement, formulated its doctrine, and oversaw its growth from a small and predominantly black congregation into a multiracial and international cult. He claimed to be God. In about 1906 he was introduced to the **“New Thought Movement”**, a philosophy of positive thinking that would help to form his later doctrines. It was from one of his sermons that songwriter Johnny Mercer took the title of his song **"Accentuate the Positive"**.

In 1912, he declared himself a god, stating that he himself was the only true expression of God's spirit.

He and his disciples formed a commune in a black middle-class apartment building. Here he held free weekly banquets and helped newcomers find jobs. He began attracting many white followers as well as black.

On May 8, 1931, a Sayville, NY deputy arrested and charged him with disturbing the peace. Remarkable during the Depression, he submitted his \$1000 bail in cash. The trial was held on May 24, 1932. The jury found him guilty on June 5. Justice Smith lectured on how Baker was a fraud and a "menace to society" before issuing the maximum sentence for disturbing the peace, one year in prison and a \$500 fine. Smith, 55, died of a heart attack days later on June 9, 1932. Many followers believed that he had been stricken by “Father Divine.” As a result of this, his movement grew to millions of members around the world. Famous cult leader Jim Jones was a follower who had actually tried, unsuccessfully, to take over the movement before starting his own “People’s Temple.”

**Where are they now?** The International Peace Mission is now an old and dwindling congregation. The movement still owns several properties, such as “Father Divine's Gladwyne estate” in Woodmont, PA and his former home in Sayville, New York, and the Circle Mission Church on Broad Street in Philadelphia, which also houses the movement's library. Chapters also exist in California and New York.

**Some obvious major lessons emerge:**

1) Everybody dies (Genesis 5:1-30, Heb. 9:27).

- 2) **“And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”** (Matthew 23:9-12).
- 3) *“God is not a man... Nor a son of man”* (Numbers 23:19)?
- 4) *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24).
- 5) *“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him”* (John 1:18).