

Black Cross (Hezekiah Jones)

By: Joseph S. Newman, popularized by Lord Buckley n.

G C G

G-D

This is the story of Hezekiah Jones...

Hezekiah Jones lived in a place... in Arkansas.

He never had too much,

except he had some land,

An' he had a couple of hogs and things like that.

He never had much money

But he spent what he did make as fast as he made it,

So it never really mattered that he had much money.

But in a cupboard there,

He kept in the cupboard...

he kept in the cupboard books,

He called the books his "rainy season."

The white folks around the county there talked about Hezekiah...

They... said, "Well... old Hezekiah, he's harmless enough,

but the way I see it he better put down them goddam books,

Readin' ain't no good, for an ignorant nigger."

G-D

One day the white man's preacher came around

Knockin' on doors, knockin' on all the doors in the county,

He knocked on Hezekiah's door.

He says, "Hezekiah, you believe in the Lord?"

Hezekiah says, "Well, I don't know, I never really SEEN the Lord,

I can't say, yes, I do..."

He says, "Hezekiah, you believe in the Church?"

Hezekiah says, "Well, the Church is divided, ain't they,

And... they can't make up their minds.

I'm just like them, I can't make up mine either."

He says, "Hezekiah, you believe

D-G

that if a man is good Heaven is his last reward?"

G-D

Hezekiah says, "I'm good... good as my neighbor."

G

C-G

"You don't believe in nothin'," said the white man's preacher,

C /b D

You don't believe in nothin'!"

"Oh yes, I do," says Hezekiah,

"I believe that a man should be indebted to his neighbor

Not for the reward of Heaven or fear of hellfire."

G

"But you don't understand," said the white man's preacher,

C

G

G-D

"There's a lot of good ways for a man to be wicked..."

/e-f# G

Then they hung Hezekiah high as a pigeon.

C

/b-a

G

D

White folks around there said, "Well... he had it comin'

'Cause the son-of-a-bitch never had no religion!"

G C /b-a G

Black Cross

Joseph S. Newman

Hezekiah Jones of Hogback County

Lived on a hill in a weather-beaten hovel

And all that he owned was a two-acre plot

And a bed and some books and a hoe and a shovel.

Hezekiah, black as the soil he was hoeing,

Worked pretty hard to make ends meet;

Raised what he ate, with a few cents over

To buy corn likker that he drank down neat,

And a few cents more that he put in the cupboard

Against what he called "de rainy season,"

But he never got to save more'n two or three dollars

Till he gave it away for this or that reason.

The white folks around knew old Hezekiah...

"Harmless enough, but the way I figger

He better lay off'n them goddam books,

'Cause readin' ain't good fer an ignorant nigger."

Reverend Green, of the white man's church,

Finally got around to "comin' ovah

To talk with you-all about the Pearly Kingdom

An' to save yo' soul fer the Lawd Jehovah!"

"D'ya b'lieve in the Lawd?" asked the white man's preacher.

Hezekiah puckered his frosty brow,

"Well I can't say 'yes,' so I ain't gonna say it,

Caze I ain't SEEN de Lawd....nowhere....no-how."

"D'ya b'lieve in Heaven?" asked the white man's preacher,

"Where you go, if you're good, fer yer last rewa'hd?"

"Ah'm good," said Hezikiah, "good as Ah'm able,

But Ah don't expect nothin' from Heaven OR the Lawd."

"D'ya b'lieve in the Church?" asked the white man's preacher.

Hezekiah said, "Well de Church is divided;
Ef they can't agree, than Ah cain't neither...
Ah'm like them....Ah ain't decided."

"You don't b'lieve nothin'," roared the white man's preacher.
"Oh yes Ah does," said old Hezikiah,
"Ah b'lieve that a man's beholden to his heighbush
Widout de hope of Heaven or de fear o' hell's fiah."

There's a lot of good ways for a man to be wicked...
They hung Hezikiah as high as a pidgeon,
And the nice folks around said, "He had it comin'
'Cause the son-of-a-bitch didn't have no religion!"

Lord Buckley's version

It's a beautiful thing.

It wasBy: Paul Newman's beloved grandfather, in Cleveland,
a Cleveland poet. It's "Black Cross."

There was Old Hezekiah Jones, of Hogback County.
He lived on a hill in a weatherbeaten hovel.
And all that he owned was a two-acre plot
with a bed and some books and a hoe and a shovel.

Old Hezekiah, black as the soil he was hoeing,
Worked pretty hard to make both ends meet.
Raised what he ate, with a few cents over
To buy corn likker that he drank down neat,

And a few cents more that he put in the cupboard
Against what he called "de rainy season,"
But he never got to save more'n two or three dollars
Till he gave it away for this or that reason.

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