



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.1, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

8/11/09

Program 97 "Crossroads" © Robert Leroy Johnson



The Song ¹

- By Delta Blues singer Robert Johnson, originally titled "Cross Road Blues"
- Covered in '69 by Cream on the world's 1st platinum double album, *Wheels of Fire*
 - Lead sung by Eric Clapton instead of by usual lead singer Jack Bruce
- Narrator attempts to hitch a ride from an intersection as darkness falls
- Legend: Song describes Johnson going to a metaphorical crossroads to meet the devil to sell his soul in exchange for becoming a famous blues player
 - Said to have taken place in Rosedale, Mississippi, at intersection of Highways 8 and 1
 - Basis for the film *Crossroads* ('86)
 - Johnson died at age 27; poorly documented life has given rise to many legends
- May refer to common fear felt by blacks who were discovered out alone after dark
 - When lynchings were still common, Johnson was likely singing about the desperation of finding his way home from an unfamiliar place as quickly as possible at sunset
- Inducted into Grammy Hall of Fame in '98
- Numerous other covers, e.g., by: The Doors, Free, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Rush, Ten Years After, Van Halen, Steve Miller Band, Molly Hatchet, Stephen Stills, Page and Plant, John Mayer
- #409 on 2004 List of Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Songs of All Time; #3 on 2008 Greatest Guitar Songs of All Time; #10 on *Guitar World's* 100 Greatest Guitar Solos

The Group -- Cream ²

- 1960s British blues-rock band / power trio comprised of bassist/vocalist Jack Bruce, guitarist/vocalist Eric Clapton, and drummer Ginger Baker
- Noted for blending blues, hard rock and psychedelic rock
- Retrospectively deemed "the first supergroup"
- Biggest hits: "I Feel Free" (UK, #11), "Sunshine of Your Love" (US, #5), "White Room" (US, #6), "Crossroads" (US, #28), and "Badge"
- Ranked #16 on VH1's *100 Greatest Artists of Hard Rock* and #66 on Rolling Stone's Greatest Artists of All Time list
- Bad chemistry between Baker and Bruce in prior group, Graham Bond Organization
 - On-stage fights, sabotaging each other's instruments, threat at knifepoint
 - Fanned by strain of Cream's non-stop touring, forcing Clapton to play peacekeeper
- '67 album *Disraeli Gears* deemed defining effort, melding psychedelic rock with blues
- Farewell tour in late '68, then disbanded; final album, *Goodbye*, released in '69
- Inducted into Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in '93; performed at induction ceremony
- Received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in '06
- Reunited for a few concerts since early '05; Bruce and Baker struggle physically

¹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crossroads_\(song\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crossroads_(song))

² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cream_\(band\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cream_(band))

I went down to the crossroads, fell down on my knee"
 I went down to the crossroads, fell down on my knee
 Asked the Lord above for mercy, "Save me if you please"



Note that in a secular song...

- Writer acknowledges God as "Lord"
- Understands the Lord can "save" him
- "...if you please" – Is there any question?
"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" – Romans 10:13; Joel 2:32a
- Concerning Jesus Christ, Peter said...
"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" – Acts 4:12

I went down to the crossroads, tried to flag a ride
 Down to the crossroads, tried to flag a ride
 Nobody seemed to know me, everybody passed by

What types of crossroads do we face in life?
 (e.g., key decisions, spiritual choices, etc.)
 How does this compare with the story of the beaten man on the road to Jericho? Lk 10:30-37

Standin' at the crossroad, baby, risin' sun goin' down
 Standin' at the crossroad, baby, eee, eee, risin' sun goin' down
 I believe to my soul, now, poor Bob is sinkin' down

(This verse is in the original Robert Johnson version, but not in the recording by Cream)

I'm going down to Rosedale, take my rider by my side
 Going down to Rosedale, take my rider by my side
 You can still 'barrelhouse', baby, on the riverside

(Cream lifted this verse from another Robert Johnson song, "Traveling Riverside Blues")

(guitar solo)

Going down to Rosedale, take my rider by my side
 Going down to Rosedale, take my rider by my side
 You can still 'barrelhouse', baby, on the riverside

Consider the words of King David when he was in trouble and great distress...

"Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink; deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters" – Psalm 69:14

(guitar solo)

You can run, you can run, tell my friend-boy Willie Brown
 You can run, you can run, tell my friend-boy Willie Brown
 And I'm standing at the crossroads, believe I'm sinking down

Johnson's appeal for help from a real-life fellow musician. In life, Johnson had requested that Willie Brown be informed in the event of his death³

And I went to the crossroad, mama, I looked east and west
 I went to the crossroad, baby, I looked east and west
 Lord, I didn't have no sweet woman, ooh well, babe, in my distress

(This verse is in the original Robert Johnson version, but not in the recording by Cream)

Final Thoughts:

We face crossroads of various kinds every day, and our lives are shaped by the choices and decisions we make. The most important decision confronting you is whether to stay on the broad road leading to destruction, or take the narrow road less traveled to live for Jesus Christ. Having accepted Christ, He gives us the Holy Spirit as a Divine Counselor to guide us through all the other crossroads in life!

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³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_Road_Blues