



"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

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Program 46 "I Saw The Light" © 1948 Hank Williams

We all know that life is brief in the context of time and eternity. Jesus – God in the flesh – lived on the earth only 33 years before His life was taken at Calvary. Alexander The Great conquered nearly all of the known world by age 33. If there is any parallel player in the world of country music, it surely must be our featured artist today – Hank Williams, Sr. – who wrote and recorded "I Saw The Light" at age 25, and died a legend at 29.

The Song ^{1,2} –

- 1948 Gospel song written, first performed by Hank Williams; now in several hymnals
- Describes Williams' religious convictions, even though he struggled with alcoholism
- Not a commercial success initially, but now one of the songs most closely tied to his career
- Also covered by, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Acuff, Merle Haggard, Bill Monroe, Jerry Reed, Willie Nelson, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Earl Scruggs, Hank Williams, Jr., and Johnny Cash
- Williams' version reached #1 on *Country Music TV's 20 Greatest Songs of Faith* in '05
- Melody is identical to Chuck Wagon Gang's 1935 country gospel song "He Set Me Free"²
- Inspiration – "...his mother, Lillian, after Williams' death, said the idea stemmed from an evening early in his career. She explained, 'We was drivin' back from doin' a show in Georgiana (AL) and I was drivin' and Hank had his head in my lap, and he said, 'Oh, Mamma, I'm tired, so tired, but I know we're almost home because I saw the light.'" The light he mentioned was from the beacon at the airport."²

The Artist ³ – Hiram "Hank" Williams (1923-1953)

- Legendary American singer-songwriter -- one of the most influential of the 20th century
- Born in Mount Olive AL to Elonzo Huble Williams and Jessie Lillybelle Williams
- Suffered from a mild undiagnosed case of a spinal disease, which gave him life-long pain—a situation linked to his later abuse of alcohol and drugs
- Grew up during Great Depression without a father-figure in the home
 - Williams' father, a veteran of WWI, was institutionalized for a brain aneurysm for 8 years
- Pioneer of honky tonk style; recorded many hits with his backup band, *The Drifting Cowboys*
- Several #1 and Top 10 country hits, including -- "Lovesick Blues", "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry", "Cold, Cold Heart", "Hey Good Lookin'", "Jambalaya (On the Bayou)", "I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive", "Kaw-Liga", "Your Cheatin' Heart", and "I Can't Help It"
- Recorded as *Luke the Drifter* beginning in 1950, a name given to Williams to distinguish his public image when recording more moralistic and religious-themed songs
- Died en route to a performance in Canton, Ohio, New Year's Day, 1953; after his death was announced, his band played "I Saw The Light" from behind the auditorium curtain
- His son (Hank Wms, Jr.), a daughter, and 3 grandchildren are successful country musicians
- The album "The Gospel According to Hank Williams" contains 25 Christian songs written and/or recorded by Hank Williams

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Saw_the_Light_%28Hank_Williams_song%29

² <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/pdcmusic/hank-williams-i-saw-the-light.html#History>

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

I wandered so aimless life filled with sin
I wouldn't let my dear Savior in
Then Jesus came like a stranger in the night
Praise the Lord I saw the light!

Aimless – or as Michael W. Smith says it in his song “Breathe” -- *“...I'm lost without You”*

God's Word explains that we all had life filled with sin:
“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
– Romans 3:23

Some people consciously reject Jesus

“Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” – Hebrews 4:7b

I saw the light I saw the light
No more darkness no more night
Now I'm so happy no sorrow in sight
Praise the Lord I saw the light!

Notice the **joy** brought about by salvation of a soul!

*“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, **you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls**”* – 1 Peter 1:8,9

Just like a blind man I wandered along
Worries and fears I claimed for my own
Then like the blind man that God gave back his sight
Praise the Lord I saw the light!

What did Jesus do for blind people?
(See Mark 8:22-26; 10:46-52; and John 9:1-41)

Ironically, when Saul “saw the light” on the road to Damascus, he was temporarily blinded!

(See Acts 9:3-9)

(Chorus repeats)

I was a fool to wander a-stray
Straight is the gate and narrow the way
Now I have traded the wrong for the right
Praise the Lord I saw the light!

Here's a clear reference to Scripture -- *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it”* – Matthew 7:8,9, NIV

(Chorus repeats)

Final thoughts:

The Scriptures are filled with associations of God with light –

“...you are a chosen people...belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light” -- 1 Peter 2:9, NIV

“...God...lives in unapproachable light” – 1 Timothy 6:16

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” – John 8:12b

“...in him there is no darkness at all” – 1 John 1:5

Have you seen the light? Jesus is the light... and to paraphrase another popular Christian song, He is there for you all the time. Simply respond to His call to you!

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