

Hymns of the Faith: “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name!”

By [Dr. Bill Wymond](#)

A Presentation of First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi
with
Dr. Ligon Duncan, Dr. Derek Thomas, and Dr. Bill Wymond

Dr. Wymond: Good morning! This is “Hymns of the Faith,” brought to you by Jackson's First Presbyterian Church. The minister of the First Presbyterian Church is Dr. Ligon Duncan. Stay tuned for “Hymns of the Faith.” And now here with “Hymns of the Faith” is Dr. Ligon Duncan.

Dr. Duncan: Thank you, Bill Wymond. This is Ligon Duncan. I'm here with Bill and with Derek Thomas for “Hymns of the Faith” where we celebrate the greatest songs of the history of Christianity, two thousand years of the richest treasury of devotional expression of faith in Christ and love for God and his mercy to us in the great hymns of the Christian faith. And today we are indeed looking at one of the finest hymns ever written in the English language.

We recently listened to one of the most popular, favorite hymn in the Christian language, *Amazing Grace!* But today we're looking at *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!*, a very majestic tune, directly exalting Christ and celebrating his exaltation. It has a grand English regal tune attached to it aptly called “Coronation.” There are other tunes that this song is sung to. I think it's sung to a tune called “St. Andrew.” It may also be sung to a tune called—Is it sung to “Miles Lane” as well? Yes, there are several tunes that this song has been sung to, but “Coronation” is a handsome, regal, sturdy tune which Bill Wymond will tell us about in just a little bit.

Bill, why don't you play that tune, because other people will have heard this song to different tunes. But let's hear “Coronation,” and then we'll come back to the story of the authors.

[Dr. Wymond plays tune.]

This is a beautiful, beautiful tune, and the song was written mostly by a gentleman from England named Edward Perronet (or “Per-o-nay” if he retained the more French pronunciation of his name). I think you were telling me, Derek, before we came on air, that he was the son of French immigrants to Britain. But also John—is it Rippon?—How do you pronounce that? “Rip-pen.” Tell us just a

little about these authors of this particular hymn. I think I'm right—I'm just recollecting this; so I may be wrong—You can correct me if I'm incorrect. Initially Perronet did not acknowledge his authorship of the song—that that only later came to light. But tell us just a little bit about the authors of this song.

Dr. Thomas: Yes, Edward Perronet (let's call him “Per-o-nay” for now) is one of these men who is really known for one thing: this hymn. He did write three volumes, I think, of poetry. Some of it is said to be fairly good, but he's only really remembered for this. And this he wrote about 10 years or so years before he died. He lived—his ancestors were French and French Protestants who left during the time of persecution in the late 17th century. I think of his ancestors, there were some (and possibly his grandfather) who initially went to Switzerland; and then I think I'm right in saying that it was Edward Perronet's parents who moved to England where they settled and where Edward was born. He lived during the time of The Great Awakening; so he was friends with John and Charles Wesley.

There was a famous story of Wesley announcing to a congregation one day that Edward Perronet (who was fairly reluctant about preaching, and of course John Wesley encouraged lay-preaching—part of the characteristic of The Great Awakening) would preach the next morning, and apparently Edward Perronet said nothing. But when the time came he announced him as the preacher for the morning, and Edward Perronet got into the pulpit and said that he was reluctant to preach a sermon but he was going to read the greatest sermon that has ever been given. And he read from beginning to end “The Sermon on the Mount” without comment, which is interesting.

This particular hymn, as I said, was written in 1779; and I think he died in 1791—so a dozen years or so before his death. There is such a majesty in this tune, but actually I remember singing this hymn to “Miles Lane” in Belfast. That would be the tune that we would sing to these words.

But now I can't associate it with anything else but “Coronation” since I've sung it so many years now to this here in the States. And I love Bill Wymond's comment about hymns being married to tunes. We've all been to churches where music has been somewhat challenged, and maybe the person in all sincerity devotes his or her life to helping the church play a piano or organ or something. But their repertoire is fairly limited, and you sing the same tunes to almost every hymn.

But I do love the association, where that's possible, of a hymn with a tune—particularly when the tune sometimes can bring back to your mind the words of the hymn very often. I was in a situation just this week, in fact, where what was going on was pretty tedious, and in my head I was singing the tune (not out loud, I hasten to say, but in my head I was singing the tune), and the tune actually brought back to my mind the words as I went along.

Dr. Wymond: We have a mutual friend, Terry Johnson, who has put out a psalter in which he would like to have had each psalm have a distinct tune; so that people could do just that. But even from the psalter, we get the hint that sometimes tunes were switched around because the superscription will say, “sing this to a certain tune”—like “the Lily of the Valley” or something like that.

Dr. Duncan: Bill, I'm going to say a few words about the text in just a few moments, but I am confirmed in the assertion that I made earlier by looking at Albert Edwards Bailey's comments in his book on the gospel and hymn about the authorship of this hymn. He says, “The editors had a hard time tracing down the authorship of this hymn. As late as 1892...” [and remember the hymn had been written in 1789, so...] “As late as 1892, it was still in doubt; although the great Julian's Dictionary of Hymnology...” [which had been written by that time] “...thought that Perronet wrote it. Final proof came 126 years after it was first printed when Dr. Louis F. Benson, minutely examining a copy of *Occasional Verses* which was written by Perronet, discovered the poet's name in an acrostic, the first letters of the lines of a poem called “On Sleep,” spell Edward Perronet. And in that same little book, this hymn is found.” And that's what sort of confirmed it—that it was Perronet.

Bill, tell us about the tune “Coronation” that has been associated with this song for some time, and which is probably our congregation's favorite hymn tune to sing this song to.

Dr. Wymond: Well, the tune “Coronation” was written by an American, I do want to stress. It is. This particular tune is by an American, Oliver Holden. And Oliver Holden lived in the latter part of the 18th century; and he was a carpenter first by trade, and then later he became a music-seller, and he actually published some little hymnals. And none of the other tunes that he wrote stand out as does this one.

Nevertheless this is a really good tune, I think, because at the important point—at the crowning of the ‘Lord of all’, you get a very dramatic and wonderful musical stress. I’ll show that. And it's interesting to me that in both the tune that the Brits use, “Miles Lane”, which Derek mentioned, the same kind of music stress and pause occurs.

I'm going to do Derek's tune, if I may, first. Here's “Miles Lane.”

[Dr. Wymond plays tune.]

Then we have a repeat of that.

[Dr. Wymond continues to play tune.]

Then at this point...When they go “and crown him,” it goes...

[Dr. Wymond continues to play tune.]

And then it's slow to the end in the version that I have. It's a nice, noble tune. It sounds like an evangelical hymn, doesn't it? Like something out of Moody and Sankey?

Dr. Duncan: Even though it was written in the late 1700's by an organist, an Anglican organist, William Shrubsole—nineteen years old when he wrote it.

Dr. Thomas: Don't you get the impression, Bill, as a musician that some tunes seem to have in mind large congregations to sing them? As though they need the weight of a thousand voices to, you know... "crown Him, crown Him, crown Him Lord of all." You can imagine a thousand voices in full blast singing that.

Dr. Wymond: Well, I always think of the Revelation passages to which this alludes—where you have the multitude in heaven worshipping God, and the 24 elders casting their crown before the Lord as they kneel down. So in that context, of course, it's a huge crowd. But also I agree with you—to sustain these large dramatic passages, it really does help to have a large crowd singing it.

But let's go to the American favorite tune for *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!* And you'll notice that both this and "Miles Lane," in the beginning do the same sort of thing. There's nothing real distinctive about the tune as it starts out. It's just talking. It's saying something and laying the groundwork for this call for everyone to "crown him Lord of all." And so "Coronation" sounds like this:

[Dr. Wymond plays tune.]

We've already listened to this. So it's just talking. Then it gets more dramatic:

"Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him.." Just like "Miles Lane."

Then this is sort of a repetition, and then crowning again. I think that's why that tune and the other tune work so well—because the music just reinforces this wonderful majesty of casting our crowns at His feet.

Dr. Thomas: What I like about "Miles Lane" is that the repetition of "crown Him, crown Him, crown Him" is an ascending series of notes as though your eyes are being lifted up and up and up to see a crowning...

[Dr. Wymnod plays "Miles Lane".]

Dr. Duncan: The whole song—not only within the stanzas is there this sort of ascent going on, this expansion and magnification of Christ going on, but there is a succession going on in each of the stanzas.

In the first stanza, the angels are summoned to acknowledge Christ for who He is. The second stanza calls upon the stars to acknowledge Him. The martyrs, in the third stanza; converted Jews, in the fourth stanza are called to acknowledge Christ. All sinners, in the fifth stanza, are called to acknowledge Christ. All mankind is called to acknowledge Christ in the sixth stanza. And then each of us personally and individually is called to acknowledge Him.

Dr. Thomas: Am I wrong in thinking that the influence behind that is the *Te Deum*?

Dr. Duncan: Oh, it definitely is following the *Te Deum*. You can see all of the classes of the *Te Deum* being appealed to there, and maybe a couple thrown in that we're not typically used to seeing.

Dr. Thomas: Bill, tell us about the *Te Deum*.

Dr. Wymond: Well, it's a very ancient hymn. "*Te Deum*" means "to God, praise to God" that is just one of the most magisterial, hymns. And it does just what you say. And what I like about this and the *Te Deum* is that it is so rooted in the psalms. It just is a thrill for me to see how the psalmist keeps asking everyone—including nature, the hills, the mountains, the rivers—all to praise God.

Dr. Thomas: Some modern versions of this, showing, I suppose, the biblical illiteracy of our time, have to change some of the verses. "The Stem of Jesse's rod", and I suppose people scratch their heads and wonder what that's all about. Of course if they knew Isaiah 11, and one of the great Christmas passages, they would understand immediately that it's a reference to Jesus. But it also reflects, doesn't it, how Biblically literate congregations were in the past. Perhaps in contrast, sadly, to some of our own congregations for whom this biblical language can often be confusing.

Dr. Wymond: Well, I have a question. Was that part of the curriculum of education in the 18th and 19th centuries, biblical religious knowledge?

Dr. Duncan: And still is in Britain. You still have to take Religious Education courses. So there is at least some modicum of exposure to biblical literature even in secular schools in Britain. The state schools all require a religious education component. It certainly would have been a part of every—the education of every gentleman or gentlewoman in Britain for many, many years as a standard component of education. Plus, they would have been singing hymns. I mean the schools themselves would have had their own hymnbooks. And just like in America, we had the old Northfield and Mount Hermon hymnal. Each of the high schools in Britain would have had their own distinctive hymnbooks that would have been sung from in chapel every week, probably in daily chapel services and such.

Dr. Wymond: And there's a sermon there, isn't there, to us. Here in the United States, just about the art—how we are not teaching music in the schools anymore. Therefore our youth are not learning the folk songs of our culture, much less the occasional hymn that might have been thrown in. Did you sing hymns in secular school when you were growing up?

Dr. Thomas: Oh, yes, every day. There was an assembly first thing in the morning and would last for 20 minutes or so. There was a Bible reading; there was a prayer—usually led by the headmaster. The Bible reading was often done by the...what you would call the 12th grade...the “prefects” of the school or the “head boy” (as I was) often read the lesson. And that was pretty standard—every single day.

It's a very similar hymn to *Amazing Grace!* In the center of it “Ye seed of Israel's chosen race, ye ransomed of the fall, hail him who saves you by his grace...” Then the next line of stanza 4: “Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget the wormwood and the gall...” Now again that probably needs a little bit of translation. But it's the idea of being saved from sin and the consequences of sin, and the theme of grace as in Newton's *Amazing Grace!* So grace is at the heart of this too.

Dr. Duncan: And even as the stanzas follow along the track of the *Te Deum* which is giving praise to the Triune God. This focuses that praise on the Lord Jesus Christ. So it follows the components of that ancient hymn that dates probably from the second century, one of the oldest hymn texts and forms that we still have in existence in the Christian tradition, is focused on the Triune God generically; and this is focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And again it picks up language like we find in Philippians 2:9-11 in which “every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord” as it expands in the call to praise to Christ. So the angels praise Him; then the martyrs praise Him; then ye seed of Israel's chosen race (that is those who are converted to Christ out of Judaism); sinners whose love can never forget; then “let every kindred and every tribe on this terrestrial ball, to Him all majesty ascribe.” And that again is language right out of Isaiah that Paul picks up—I think it's Isaiah 43—and then Paul picks up on it and plants it right in the middle of his hymn to Christ in Philippians, chapter 2.

Dr. Thomas: A couple of quick observations and maybe a question to begin with, Ligon. Isn't worship supposed to be all about me? [laughter] I mean don't we often hear people say, “I didn't get anything out of that service.” And isn't this such a marvelous hymn to remind us that worship is about God and about Jesus Christ?

Dr. Wymond: I really had a wonderful conversation with a brother-in-law this

weekend, and I'm rejoicing over the fact that he is really going to a biblical-preaching church. But he made a funny comment to me. He said, "You know what I love about this church is..." And, Derek, you would like this. "...we have a Starbuck's in the church." And he said, "And even better than that, we can just take it right in to the sanctuary. It's so comfortable, so wonderful." Not that people shouldn't be comfortable and not that they shouldn't drink Starbuck's, but that to me is a little reflection of the "me-centeredness" of our culture.

Dr. Thomas: And one of the things that concern me often about hymnody is: Where is this hymn appropriate in the service? And sometimes I think that very little thought is given to that. We sing this, because we like this hymn. We haven't sung it recently, but—Is this an opening hymn?

I often think that it's a good practice, in general, to begin with a hymn extolling the Trinity; a second hymn about Christ, which would be this one; a third one about the Spirit, preparing for the reading of Scripture and preaching; and then a fourth one perhaps relating to the theme of the sermon. So this would be a wonderful second hymn.

Dr. Duncan: Well, the problem with it is that it is so grand that it almost begs to be sung either first or last. And we have moved it around at different places in our services for different reasons.

Dr. Wymond: For many years we used to always sing this at the end of our communion service. I thought that was an interesting use of it. I think it's interesting that, as the hymn begins, it's that phrase from Philippians "All hail the power of Jesus' Name." That statement is used to represent the totality of Jesus, as you start out. Isn't that an interesting theme that he chose as he was trying to think of a way to...

Dr. Thomas: And, of course, just as Ligon has been reminding us in the interpretation of Philippians 2, so this hymn is saying, "It's not just the name—Jesus isn't the name. It's 'Lord of All.' That is the name that we bestow." And that's an important issue—that Jesus is Lord.

Dr. Duncan: And that forces you back into the doctrine of the Trinity as well as you wrestle with that. The author, John Rippon, Derek, who added a stanza and actually did some changing around of the third stanza in order to make it a little bit clearer—he wanted to make clear what it was that Perronet was trying to say. I must confess I see Rippon's name in several places in hymnody, including—isn't there a tune named "Rippon" as well? But I don't think I know as much about him. Do you have anything for us briefly to say about Rippon?

Dr. Thomas: Well, he was born in 1751 in Tiverton in Devon, which is down in the...

Dr. Duncan: Toward Exeter? Down towards the little shoehorn of England. It's a beautiful part of the world—forests, big, think green forests.

Dr. Thomas: He was a Baptist pastor in 1773. He went, interestingly enough, to the Baptist College in Bristol which has, of course, seen better days now.

Dr. Duncan: Let's listen to this hymn, Bill.

Dr. Wymond: Dr. Duncan, singing *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!* for us is Ben Roberson.

[Soloist sings:]

All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all;
bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all.

Crown him, ye martyrs of your God,
who from his altar call;
extol the Stem of Jesse's rod,
and crown him Lord of all;
extol the Stem of Jesse's rod,
and crown him Lord of all.

Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,
ye ransomed of the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all;
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all.

Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget
the wormwood and the gall,
go, spread your trophies at his feet,
and crown him Lord of all;
go, spread your trophies at his feet,
and crown him Lord of all.

Let ev'ry kindred, ev'ry tribe,
on this terrestrial ball,
to him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all;
to him all majesty ascribe,

and crown him Lord of all.

O that with yonder sacred throng
we at his feet may fall;
we'll join the everlasting song,
and crown him Lord of all;
we'll join the everlasting song,
and crown him Lord of all.

Dr. Wymond: This has been “Hymns of the Faith” brought to you by Jackson's First Presbyterian Church.

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