

TEN TOP JESUS SONGS

1 IN CHRIST ALONE

Singing of the hope, future and security that we have thanks to Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

2 THE KING OF LOVE

An invitational song highlighting the coming of the Kingdom in our lives and the lives of others.

3 NO OTHER NAME BUT THE NAME OF JESUS

The title says it all!

4 JESUS WE ENTRONE YOU

Through this song we invite Jesus to be not just Saviour but also Lord of all.

5 HE HAS RISEN

Resurrection party time! Some good theological content and eschatological (end times) lyrics.

6 CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS

Celebrating not just the resurrected, but also ascended Lord Jesus.

7 ALL HEAVEN DECLARES

Remembering that we are joining with the '24/7' worship of Jesus and a great outward focused second verse ("I will proclaim...").

8 YOUR BLOOD (NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD)

Cross-centred song, great for confession and communion.

9 I BELIEVE IN JESUS

A modern-day (well, 80's!) version of a creed, declaring our belief and assurance of Jesus in our lives.

10 JESUS SHALL TAKE THE HIGHEST HONOUR

Declaration that everything comes under Jesus' rule and reign, great teamed with Revelation 4 and 5.

EASTER WEBSITES

As we draw near to Easter, have you thought about celebrating the season of Lent in more depth than just giving up chocolate? Take the 40 days before Easter to focus on Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness and look further into prayer and fasting and giving to the poor, the traditional three staples of the Lenten season in the Christian church. This might help prepare us for Easter and the week preceding, Holy Week. Lent begins on Wednesday 1 March so why not check out some of these websites to help ensure that our celebration of the risen Lord Jesus doesn't just start on Easter Sunday!

www.ship-of-fools.com/Features/frameit.htm?0202/Lent.html

Alternative ideas for each day of Lent including sending an email to someone you haven't been in contact for a while and being nice to your boss for the day!!

www.kingofpeace.org/lent.htm

A good overview of the Lenten season and explains the significance of Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday etc.

www.kingofpeace.org/palmcrosses/

How to make palm crosses, the essential accompaniment for Palm Sunday!

www.faith-at-home.com/tips/holy-week.html

Some ideas for celebrating Holy Week in our home with friends and families.

FURTHER READING

Still got those book tokens left over from Christmas? How about swapping them for one of the following?

Created for Worship *Noel Due, Mentor 2005*

Salvation's Song *Marcus Green, Kingsway 2004*

Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace *James Torrance, Paternoster Press 1996*

Ancient Future Faith *Robert Webber, Baker Books 1999*

An Easter Festival and points to ponder...

We see in this early experience the seeds of what developed into standard church practice. The period of Lent, reflecting Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, is a time of preparation and identification with Jesus. Is there room for us to consider a long preparation for Easter day? A time to take stock, to re-prioritise, to recover a sense of dying to self, in order that the resurrection life of Christ might be more fully ours. Palm Sunday, a week before Easter, remembers Jesus' welcome into Jerusalem, and anticipates the hope of a new victorious King. Maundy Thursday remembers the Last Supper and Jesus' subsequent arrest.

The extremes of the Easter story are most stark on Good Friday as the focus turns to Jesus' suffering and death. Many churches use some or all of the 14 Stations of the Cross (the basis for Mel Gibson's film 'The Passion of The Christ') to walk through and fully appreciate the realities of Jesus' experience. In them there is opportunity for connection for their own experience of struggle and suffering both personally and in this world.

From the depths of the suffering of Good Friday, and the quietness and waiting of Easter Saturday, Easter Sunday explodes with resurrection life: the celebration of the victorious Resurrection of Jesus, resurrection life for those in Him, and future resurrection for the whole of creation. Over centuries on Easter morning, people have gathered on hilltops, beaches and open meadows to greet the rising sun, a visual reminder of the risen Son of God.

In the midst of the Easter story and the possibility of reliving it as a Festival, people can find their own journey. They can rediscover again the reality of Jesus' transforming work in their own lives, the journey of suffering and rejection through to victory and resurrection.

As I write this I wonder if I have found a reason for my own frustration and dissatisfaction with my Easter experience. We love the dramatic salvation stories. The reminder of the depths of God's grace is so encouraging to our faith. The rags-to-riches stories are so powerful because they deal with both the downs and the ups of the story. The flow, the texture, the depths and the heights of the Easter story are what give it such a dynamic, and its power.

Is it possible then to resurrect Easter, to increase its place and significance in our church communities? Honestly, I am not yet sure. But giving people the chance to engage in an experiential way with the flow of the story, as in the Passover feast, is surely worth a try.

Mark Norridge is married to Maddy and they have three great lads, Jack, Reuben and Asher. They are based in Northampton and are leading an innovative and experimenting church plant. They would love to see the emergence of multiple missional communities around Northampton. Mark's spare time is spent lighting the fire (and other things), playing with the kids, and watching films. As well as his church responsibilities Mark works part-time as an IT manager. He has been known to blog at www.ccn-online.org.uk/blog/html

di is a magazine encouraging, challenging and helping to equip people across the European Salt & Light family of churches in the area of worshipping God and the creative arts. It is a FREE publication aimed primarily at those involved in what might be called the 'worship ministry' in its various disciplines: music, song, poetry, art, dance etc. However, as God's people worshipping Him is a big part of our 'corporate' life. So if you are a 'worshipper' of God we hope di will encourage you!

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DIRECT INPUT

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SPRING 2006

WORSHIPPING JESUS

Welcome to this special *conference* edition of di magazine - this is our 15th issue (where does time go?) and we're thankful to God both for his generous financial provision to us as a team, allowing us to produce the magazine in the first place and the positive feedback we regularly receive from our readership. As with the previous 14 issues of di we trust you will find this one inspiring, challenging and downright helpful!

In keeping with the conference theme '*The message and mission of Jesus*' this issue's underlying message is that Jesus and his story should be the *centre* of worship - our headline article by Simon Shaw (Principal of King's Bible College and Training Centre) speaks to this important issue.

Also, look out for Mark Norridge's thoughtful piece on Easter and the David Woodhouse interview on the 'flowering of the cross'. Without any collusion on their part, their respective contributions really compliment one another.

Finally look out for a few helpful tips including Ten Top Jesus songs and a devotional approach to watching 'The Passion of The Christ'

May our worship reflect the message and the mission of Jesus!

Bill Nisbet
EDITOR

christ centred worship

by Simon Shaw

It's all about you Jesus

Many of us sing this line week in week out. But, to quote another well-known lyric, '*is this the real life, or is this just fantasy?*' A feature of modern thought, which has fuelled our consumerist culture, is individualism. In light of this, we need to examine how much of worship, indeed Christianity in general, we have made to be 'all about me'. How often do we seek the feel-good factor for ourselves and judge worship times on the basis of our own emotional response? Certainly worship is to be enjoyed - we're never more fully human than when we're worshipping God - however, it's not meant to be all about us.

How we worship God must reflect who he is. Christ centred worship should inform a 24/7 whole-life worshipful response to the living God. Jesus' story is the one true story that gathers all other stories into its orbit - '*the centrality of Christ to the entire created order is not simply a well reasoned argument but a matter of faith expressed in the actions of a worshipping community*' (Robert Webber). When we worship Jesus, we enter into his story and re-centre, re-align and re-orientate our lives around him, finding our identity in Christ who determines who we are and gives us our family name. It all revolves around Jesus, the centrepiece of everything we believe, so let's fix our eyes on him (Heb 12:2).

This is our story, this is our song...

Jesus' story is at the heart of Christian worship. 'Wrong worship' (idolatry) puts other things in the place of God, worshipping the *created* rather than the *Creator* (Rom 1:25). Jesus alone enables us to offer 'right worship' to God. In *Salvation's Song* Marcus Green describes Jesus' death on the cross as 'the perfect act of worship', the heart of his message and mission.

Jesus' story means that salvation is central to worship. A key worship image for the Jews is the Passover and Exodus, where God brought his people out of slavery in Egypt, delivering them to freedom in the promised land (Exodus 12 -15), an event celebrated at the Passover festival. But the story continues! Just as the Jews recall a saving event in history, Christian worship is rooted in a further actual event. At the cross God redeemed (bought back) his people, marking the end of the old slavery to sin and the beginning of a new resurrection life. So, through his death, resurrection and gift of the Spirit, Jesus frees us to worship God in a whole new way.

One of the main purposes of NT worship was to assure the believing community of their hope in Christ. We need to remind ourselves of who we are through the content of our worship (psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, prayer, testimony, preaching and communion). These things should '*tell and act out the story of God's saving work in history, culminating in the work of Christ to overthrow the powers of evil and establish his kingdom here on earth*' (Webber).

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What do you get if you take a wooden cross, some chicken wire, an assortment of flowers, a generous helping of greenery, a gathering of believers and some guests? You get an exciting, creative, inclusive Easter guest service! David Woodhouse (Hexham Community Church) tells us more...

David, tell us what actually happened at the Easter '05 guest service.

DW: As part of the guest service we normally like to do something a bit different that will communicate the theme of the service. This Easter we were concentrating on the cross and how God takes that which is ugly and cruel and transforms it into something beautiful. So at that point in the service we started by explaining this and interspersed it with people reading out scripture from around the church, then people were invited to bring their flowers and greenery and to use them to transform the wooden cross as a visual illustration of what God can do. The effect was very moving; I don't think anyone was not impacted by it.

How did you get the idea for the 'flowering of the cross' in the first place?

DW: I'm not sure where the idea came from exactly. It was either from the creative worship workshop at the leaders conference last year or Henry Ford mentioned something about Gary using a wooden cross in a service at Basingstoke but the concept seemed ideal for our Easter guest service so I phoned Gary.

So you didn't have a problem plagiarising someone else's idea?

DW: Well, part of putting a guest service together is taking people and their God given creative talents and ideas and using those to reach people in a variety of ways. I talked the whole thing through with Gary who had the original idea, and he sent me some materials he had used. It just seemed to fit in with the whole concept of the transforming power of the cross.

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Why not watch *The Passion of The Christ* this Easter, or maybe another film about the life of Jesus? In the course of the evening you could also include some devotional elements such as prayer, reading of relevant scriptures, communion and worship.

The message of Hebrews

Worship is at the heart of the book of Hebrews because the person and work of Christ are centre-stage. God is most clearly revealed in his Son, God's final and definitive word, who is better than everything that has gone before and better than anything to come (1:3). Jesus is our Great High Priest, the 'leader of our worship' (8:1-2). Calvin noted that Christ not only 'heeds our praise' but is also the 'chief conductor of our worship'. Jesus is both the offerer of perfect worship to God and the one through whom God is worshipped by his people.

But how can Jesus be both the object of worship and the one offering worship? Jesus is both fully divine (for only God can save), and fully human (the second Adam, representing the human race) (2:17). Hebrews highlights the humanity of Jesus, one who is able to sympathise with our weakness (4:14). As our Great High Priest, Jesus represents the people of God and offers worship on our behalf (5-9) - worship which God has provided for humanity and which alone is acceptable to him. We can approach God in confidence because of Jesus' blood (4:16; 10:19-22) and through him continually offer God a sacrifice of praise (13:15). Unlike the Old Testament sacrifices, Christ's sacrifice is once and for all (Ch.10) 'a perfect sacrifice, by a perfect person to perfect some very imperfect people' (Eugene Peterson).

Is our worship performance driven or Christ-centred?

In *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* James Torrance identifies two approaches to worship:

Performance-driven A common view is that worship is something we do on a Sunday morning before God. The language used is very much human-centred and depends on our own effort i.e. if we're feeling up for it, try hard enough and sing loudly enough, God will be pleased with our worship. This can engender weariness as we watch the preacher/worship leader/meeting leader doing his or her thing, exhorting us to do our thing and then all go home for a rest! If we're not careful, our straining and striving to get it all together before God can get in the way of what he's already doing for us.

Christ-centred The second view is that 'worship is the gift of participating through the Holy Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father'. This is a truly Trinitarian approach to worship, a 'gifted response' as Matt Redman puts it. We recognise our need of mercy and participate in what Christ has done for us in his self-offering of himself to the Father - we don't need him to do anything more and don't judge our worship on whether we get goose bumps! By his Spirit, Jesus lifts us out of our self-absorption into the very life and communion of the Godhead for which we're created.

Coming back to the heart of worship

Christian worship is rooted and grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In worship we are wholly dependent on Christ, not our own techniques or resources. Robert Webber offers some helpful practical out-workings of this:

Worship space Using visual symbols, which point toward, remind us of and help us, focus on Christ.

The order of worship Ensuring that worship is first upward (i.e. to love God) then outward (to love our neighbour).

Music Using songs which are all about Christ rather than 'all about me'.

Baptism Understanding that when we enter the waters of baptism, we are brought into a new way of life in Christ.

The Eucharist (communion) Recovering the centrality of the communion table in our gatherings.

The Christian Year Recognising that by observing the church calendar we can align our lives with the living, dying, raising and coming of Christ.

With this in mind, the role of a meeting leader/worship leader/preacher and indeed fellow worshipper is to present Christ to people, not to project ourselves. It is not the excellence of our songs, but the excellence of Christ, which makes our worship acceptable to God. Jesus transformed worship because of whom he is and what he did as a true worshipper truly worshipping - there is no band or singing but this is true worship. It really is all about him!

Simon is married to Gaynor and they have one daughter, Olivia. They live in Oxford and are part of the leadership team at Oxford Community Church where they regularly lead worship. Simon is the Principal of KBCTC. He is fond of the letter 'U' and number '2' and recently dug out his golf clubs which had spent the previous 10 years gathering dust in the loft in the hope of some sporting activity away from the armchair this year!

easter past and present

by Mark Norridge

I must start this article with a small *confession*: in my brief time as a church leader, Easter has proved to be frustrating. In our churches we celebrate two Christian Festivals, Christmas and Easter, which combine with main UK holidays, but the demands of modern life mean that these holidays are opportunities for relaxing and escaping from all aspects of life, often including church. Of course Christmas is the main festival and there is no way of escaping it. Therefore we fight to continue to find meaning in it for others and ourselves. Easter, however, does not seem to afford itself the same luxury. Is it possible that Easter is fading from our church calendar?

Why frustrating though? Well, because as I plan for the gathering on Easter Sunday, I begin to get excited about Jesus' resurrection, only to find that we as community are not ready for it or have taken the opportunity for a holiday. It is frustrating because, at the end of it, Easter has been a profoundly dissatisfying experience.

What am I to do about this? Is it *commercial success* that makes Christmas such a big deal? Are there more possibilities for the Festivals than the opportunity for another guest service? Is it possible to allow the festivals to become deeply enriching experiences, feeding our lives and imaginations, enabling us to live more dynamically and faithfully following Jesus?

Festivals for the Jews

For the Jews, festivals punctuated their life, engaging them with God's dealings through their history, shaping their present identity as a people, as well as forming and capturing their hopes for what God will do in the future. For the Jews, to forget was the deepest unfaithfulness, to remember was to allow the past to shape their future.

The festivals were 'enacted remembrance' that put them into the story and allowed them in some way to experience it. Passover, their most important festival, celebrated the deliverance from slavery in Egypt by 'reliving' the experience of their forefathers. As the rabbis said: 'in every generation a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt'.

The First Easter and the early church

The 'First Easter' took place at the time of Passover. The last supper was a Passover meal, significantly and surprisingly changed by Jesus' explanations of the symbols. He took the Passover story and wove in his own story, redefining the meal around himself, fulfilling the Jewish hope of redemption and covenant renewal through his own one-time sacrificial death.

The early church did not miss this link and they soon adopted this as their own festival, their own opportunity to relive the story of the new Passover. Initially the Early church celebrated this central event *weekly*. Their regular gatherings were on the first day of the week, the Sunday (a working day), to celebrate the day of the Resurrection. Friday, conversely, became the day of penance, fasting and sorrow.

They also kept a *yearly* celebration which tied into the period of Jewish Passover. The Easter Sunday celebrations were often accompanied by baptisms of new believers, and a day of recommitment for those already baptised. In a similar way to the weekly celebrations, there was a time of preparation. For example, the week before baptism candidates wore sackcloth to mark the period of fasting and repentance - a look that may work well today with a few rips and exposed seams! All believers joined them in reconsidering their lives and need of forgiveness.

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Once the idea was in place how did you then go about turning it into reality? Did you have a team?

DW: Yes we do have a team who meet together to plan and organise the guest services but as I was the one with the initial thought for that part of the service it was left to me to organise the various elements. The church was asked the previous week to bring some flowers/greenery and one of the ladies organised additional flowers for visitors. Several people were asked to read the various scriptures and a couple of teenagers were asked to be available to help people put their flowers on the cross. The chicken netting came from a couple that have a small farm and I built the cross in my garage one Saturday.

Had you previously tried anything similar or was this your first foray into what we might call 'creative worship'?

DW: No, as part of our guest services we have used drama, different styles of music, poetry, video and PowerPoint to help communicate a particular theme.

On the day, what was the actual effect, did people respond positively?

DW: I had no idea how well it was going to work but people were brilliant. I think just about everybody came out, from the smallest child to the more mature of us, and the colour and smell when it was finished was outstanding. At the end of the service we moved it outside the church for the next couple of days so that passers by could see the transformed cross.

Finally, what would you say to anyone who would like to branch out into some kind of creativity in the worship context?

DW: Go for it; it allows God to work in all sorts of ways.

David Woodhouse lives in Hexham with Pauline and their two sons Daniel and Jonathan. He works for the Forestry Commission at Kielder Forest managing timber harvesting operations. All of the family are part of Hexham Community Church. David goes jogging regularly and completed his first half marathon in September 2004.

KINGS BIBLE COLLEGE & TRAINING CENTRE

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At the very heart of the Bible is a songbook! The psalms contain songs which express every possible human emotion, from passionate praise to heartfelt lament and everything else in between. Join Simon and Gaynor Shaw in exploring this book which is the voice of God's people singing, reminding us of the central role of worship in the biblical story.

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