

## PEOPLE-AND THE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC

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When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7).

And they sung a new song (Rev. 5:9).

There is a vast difference between music and noise, but unfortunately some people do not appreciate the fact! Music is attractive, soothing, and wonderful; noise is offensive, unappealing, and without merit. Webster's Dictionary defines music as: "The art and science of combining vocal or instrumental sounds or tones in varying harmony or rhythm." If music disappeared, the world would lose much of its charm. It is almost frightening to remember that there was a time when the earth was a place of silence. Then the Creator introduced the sigh of the wind in the trees, the song of a bird in the forest, and the gentle murmurs of waves falling upon a sandy beach. It took a longer period for man to learn how to sing, but humans were eventually compelled to express their happiness. Increasing pleasure does not live with silent tongues. The first reference to music was made when God questioned Job about the creation of the world. The Lord said, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4, 7). How that music eventually spread through this world is an exciting story.

The Song of Redemption... Gratitude  
Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea (Exod. 15:1).

It may be significant that the earliest days of man were shrouded in mystery. The descendants of Adam and Eve had little to bequeath to their offspring. The ancient records say men lived, begat children, and then died. This continued until

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after the marriages of Lamech when the historian began supplying details of the talents possessed by individuals. For example, the children of Lamech and Adah became cattle-rearing nomads (Gen. 4:20). The family of their second son, Jubal, made and played harps and organs. A son born to his second wife, Zilla, was called Tubal-cain who became an instructor in the making of articles from brass and iron (see Gen. 4:22). It is interesting that the second son developed a love for musical instruments.

That gift became the heritage of God's people. When Jehovah rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, Moses looked back over the watery grave of his enemies and led the Israelites in an anthem of praise.

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea (Exod. 15:20-21).

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That spontaneous outburst of praise was the first celebration held among the people of God.

The Song Requested... Gloom

After the children of Israel returned from Babylon, one of their scribes wrote:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in strange land? (Ps. 137:1-3).

It is thought-provoking that the request of the Babylonians was refused. It is always difficult for brokenhearted people to produce mirth. Music is always muted when the voice is hushed

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by sobs. Those Hebrews would have appreciated the message of a modern hymn:

The peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet the memory still;  
But they have left an aching, void  
The world can never fill.

The prisoners were troubled by unpleasant memories. This always happens when people lose God, their sanctuary, and never listen to a prophet. Daniel had risen to heights of distinction in Babylon, but he was never as confident as when he prayed before opened windows.

A tremendous transformation occurred when God rescued His suffering people. One of their number wrote: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them" (Ps. 126:1-2). When a believer has lost the peace which formerly filled his soul, he should retrace his steps and correct his mistake. When debris chokes a well, it is wise to remove the hindrance so that the springs may once again become active.

The Song of the Redeemer... Gracious

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives (Mark 14:26).

It is impossible to comprehend how the Savior could sing in the most difficult period of His life. He was suffering extreme anguish; His body was soon to be nailed to a cross when he would bear the sins of the world. Judas was planning to betray Him, and the other disciples would run for their lives. Yet, in spite of the unprecedented circumstances, Jesus completed the Passover Feast by singing a psalm normally used during the commemoration. It is difficult to understand His ability to do this when other people would have been devastated. It should be remembered what the writer to the

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Hebrews said of the Lord: "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). The composure of Christ remained undisturbed because His fellowship with God was unbroken.

During the Savior's temptation in the wilderness, His ministry, and the awful sufferings that He endured, the Lord thought only of others. When the forces of evil would have overwhelmed Him, Christ was indeed "The Sun of righteousness, who arose with healing in His wings" (see Mal. 4:2). The music of victory was never silenced.

### The Song of Rejoicing... Gladness

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them (Acts 16:25).

The city of Philippi was in an uproar; the citizens who were usually calm and restrained had become an infuriated mob. Two strangers had interfered with the lucrative business of a fortune teller, and her employers, realizing a valuable source of income had been lost, blamed the preachers. The magistrates who forgot their sacred duty of being just became a part of the unruly crowd. Bleeding and in danger of becoming martyrs, Paul and Silas were dragged through the city and thrown into prison. Their blood dripped on the dirty floor

while pandemonium reigned in the streets. Then a voice was heard in the darkness: "Silas, are you awake?" "Yes, my brother, I am." "How do you feel?" "Well, I have felt better but thank God, I am alive." "Brother Silas, let's give them something to think about. Let's sing." Maybe their voices at first were not too resonant, but soon the prison echoed with glorious music. The other prisoners would normally have complained, but they realized this was something strange. The new inmates were either mad or remarkable people. When an earthquake increased the sounds in the night, most of the prisoners believed the world was falling apart. When the jailer discovered what had happened, Paul and Silas, fearing the man might injure himself, shouted, "Do thyself no harm, we

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are all here." That night was never forgotten. It was the only time men sang their way out of prison.

### The Song of Reunion... Glorious

And they sung a new song . . . And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, Saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb that was slain (Rev. 5:9-12).

The world has enjoyed the renditions of many massed choirs, for even the ancient Hebrews supported the choirs that sang in the tabernacle and temple. The Levites performed for specified periods before returning to their homes to enjoy short vacations. Throughout history nations arranged special celebrations of praise, and the wonderful choirs of Europe enthralled innumerable listeners. Kings, queens, and distinguished citizens have acclaimed the splendor of the magnificent performers. From the cathedrals of Europe to the valleys of Wales and beyond, music has been the highlight of every community. Even the birds greet the dawn with an anthem of praise. Yet the final details regarding the evolution of music will be

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provided by God, who has reserved this revelation for Himself. John said the choir of heaven would exceed one hundred million artists who would be accompanied by trumpets, harps, cymbals, and other instruments. It seems improbable that such a choir could perform in one place at the same time. These singers may be distributed throughout God's new world.

It has been an immense privilege to listen to the great choirs of earth. I have been enthralled by amazing singers in many countries. Who could possibly describe the productions to be made by heaven's international artists? The greatest talents of all time will produce the most attractive music ever heard. Even the angelic hosts will be excited when they hear redeemed saints singing, "worthy is the lamb that was slain." Throughout eternity many earthly events will be forgotten. The Bible says, "They will not even come into mind." Yet Calvary will be remembered for ever. Maybe one of the songs to be heard in heaven will be:

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My Lord has garments so wondrous fine,  
And myrrh their texture fills;  
Its fragrance reached to this heart of mine,  
With joy my being thrills.

Out of the ivory palaces,  
Into this world of woe;  
Only His great eternal love,  
Made my Savior go.

In garments glorious He will come,  
To open wide the door;  
And I shall enter my heavenly home  
To dwell for evermore.  
Into the ivory palaces,  
Out of this world of woe;  
Saved by His great eternal love,  
I shall one day go.  
Henry Barraclough

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