



# **Why on Earth do we sing?**

## A Biblical Theology of Singing

'It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High.' (Psalm 92.1)



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A Biblical Theology of Singing

# Singing begins and ends in Heaven

“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ...  
While the morning stars sang together and all the  
angels shouted for joy?” (Job 38.4, 7)

# Singing begins and ends in Heaven

'He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.'  
(Zephaniah 3.17)

# Singing begins and ends in Heaven

'Sing, Daughter Zion;  
shout aloud, Israel!

Be glad and rejoice with all your heart...

The Lord has taken away your punishment,  
he has turned back your enemy...

The Lord your God is with you...

He will take great delight in you;

in his love he will no longer rebuke you,

but will rejoice over you with singing.' (v13–17)



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# Antiphon = Opposite Voices



# Worship in the Temple

'All these men were under the supervision of their father for the music of the temple of the Lord... all of them trained and skilled in music for the Lord—they numbered 288.' (1 Chron 25.6–7)

'Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness.' (2 Chron 20.21)

2 Chron 23.18; 29.30; 30.2... etc

# The First Song

## Moses & Miriam (Exodus 15)

- **Plagues:** Judgments upon the 'gods' (Numbers 33.4)
- **Sacrifice:** The perfect lamb in place of the firstborn son
- **Sea:** An ancient symbol of chaos and disorder

# The First Song (Exodus 15)

'Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

"I will sing to the Lord,  
for he is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver  
he has hurled into the sea.

"The Lord is my strength and my defence;  
he has become my salvation...

# The First Song (Exodus 15)

The Lord is a warrior;  
the Lord is his name...  
Your right hand, Lord,  
was majestic in power...  
The enemy boasted,  
'I will pursue, I will overtake them...'  
But you blew with your breath,  
and the sea covered them.

# The First Song (Exodus 15)

Who among the gods  
is like you, Lord?

Who is like you—  
majestic in holiness,  
awesome in glory,  
working wonders?

“You stretch out your right hand,  
and the earth swallows your enemies.

# The First Song (Exodus 15)

In your unfailing love you will lead  
the people you have redeemed.  
In your strength you will guide them  
to your holy dwelling.  
The nations will hear and tremble...  
You will bring them in and plant them  
on the mountain of your inheritance—

# The First Song (Exodus 15)

the place, Lord, you made for your dwelling,  
the sanctuary, Lord, your hands established.

“The Lord reigns  
for ever and ever.”

# The First Song (Exodus 15)

Then Miriam the prophet... took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the Lord,  
for he is highly exalted.  
Both horse and driver  
he has hurled into the sea.”

# The Final Song

# The Final Song

'I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." 'Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne' (Rev 5.4–6)

# The Final Song

And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

(Rev 5.9-10)

# The Final Song

'Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
be praise and honour and glory and power,  
for ever and ever!"

The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.' (Rev 5.13–14)

# The Final Song

'I saw in heaven another great and marvellous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed. And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb' (Revelation 15.1–3)

# The Final Song

“Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.  
Just and true are your ways, King of the nations.  
Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name?  
For you alone are holy.  
All nations will come and worship before you,  
for your righteous acts have been revealed.”  
(Revelation 15.3–4)

# The Final Song

'Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them... 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

(Revelation 21.1–4)

# Jesus' Song

'They spoke about his departure (*exodus*), which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem' (Luke 9:31)

# Jesus' Song

'When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives' (Matthew 26.30; Mark 14.26)

# The Goal of Salvation

# The Goal of Salvation

'The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.' (Romans 8.19-21)

# The Goal of Salvation

'The meadows are covered with flocks  
and the valleys are mantled with grain;  
they shout for joy and sing' (Psalm 65.13)

'Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;  
let all the trees of the forest sing for joy' (Psalm 96.12)

# The Goal of Salvation

'Let the rivers clap their hands,  
let the mountains sing together for joy' (Psalm 98.8)

# The Goal of Salvation

'You will go out in joy  
and be led forth in peace;  
the mountains and hills  
will burst into song before you,  
and all the trees of the field  
will clap their hands'. (Isaiah 35.2)

# The Goal of Salvation

'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting' (1 Chronicles 16.36)

# The Goal of Salvation

'Sing to the Lord, all the earth...

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad...

Let the sea resound, and all that is in it;

let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them!

Let the trees of the forest sing,

let them sing for joy before the Lord,

for he comes to judge the earth.'

(1 Chronicles 16.31–33)



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# The Goal of Salvation

'In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

We have a strong city;

God makes salvation, its walls and ramparts...

We have not brought salvation to the earth,

and the people of the world have not come to life.

But your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise —

let those who dwell in the dust

wake up and shout for joy' (Isaiah 26.1-2, 18-19)



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# How on Earth do we sing?

'How can we sing the songs of the Lord  
while in a foreign land?' (Psalm 137.4)

# How on Earth do we sing?

**Past**

Celebrate God's  
acts of deliverance  
in the past and his  
good character

**Present**

**Future**



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# How on Earth do we sing?

## Past

Celebrate God's acts of deliverance in the past and his good character

## Present

## Future

Anticipate with confidence the salvation that is certain to come

# How on Earth do we sing?

## Past

Celebrate God's  
acts of deliverance  
in the past and his  
good character

## Present

Celebrate  
Lament  
Cry out for salvation  
Allegiance & defiance

## Future

Anticipate with  
confidence the  
salvation that is  
certain to come



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# How on Earth do we sing?

'I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart;  
before the "gods" I will sing your praise.'  
(Psalm 138.1)

# How on Earth do we sing?

'About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.'  
(Acts 16.25–26)

# How on Earth do we sing?

'Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying:

"Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever."

As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.'

(2 Chronicles 20.21–22)



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