

LIFE OUTSIDE THE HOME Music

Almost as soon as man was created, there was music in the world. By Genesis chapter four we learn of Jubal who played the harp and the flute. Since then, musical instruments have been unearthed in numerous archaeological expeditions. Let's go outside the home and *listen* to the music of Bible times.



Times and Places for Music

Banquets Instruments such as *timbrels* (tambourines) and harps were used at special banquets and gatherings. When Jacob left Laban, Laban suggested that he should have been sent off with music and festivity. *Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of tambourines and harps?* (Gen 31:27) Isaiah talks about the feasts of his day being complete with strings, flutes, and timbrels (5:12).

Victory Instrumental music along with singing and dancing accompanied those times when the LORD gave Israel victory over her enemies. When David defeated the Philistines, music was played (1 Sam 18:6) . You might also remember that there was celebration with music after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground.

! Read Exodus 15

Coronation When Joash was crowned king, the royal trumpeters were right beside him (2 Chr 23:13).

Gathering In Numbers 10, God had Moses make trumpets out of hammered silver. The trumpets were to be blown when the Israelites were expected to gather at the Tent of Meeting. When both trumpets sounded, everyone was to gather. When one trumpet was sounded, just the leaders of the tribes were to gather.

Leading Also in Numbers 10, God directed that the trumpets be blown when the Israelites were to set out and move their camp.

Devotion A very interesting reference to music is found in 2 Kgs 3:15. In our churches, we are accustomed to music being played before worship. The music helps us get into a devotional and reverent mood before approaching the LORD. In this Scripture verse, the prophet Elisha asks that the harp be played before he begins to prophecy, apparently creating a devotional atmosphere in which he could speak the word of God.

Instruments

It is a little difficult to determine sometimes the exact nature of all the instruments listed in the Bible. The "psaltery" and the "viol" for example are stringed instruments of some sort. The "harp" is more like what we would call a "lyre" and is not the type of concert harp that you would see in an orchestra. Cymbals were made from plates of brass and there is even a possible reference to a bagpipe in Daniel 3:5.

The Great Hymn Book

The Psalms constitute the great hymnal of the Bible. In fact, they really make up the greatest hymnal in the world. Many were written by David and were originally set to music. In English, one doesn't always recognize the beauty of the original Hebrew poetry, but in any language, the Psalms convey the grace and mercy of God in a deep and emotional way.



How did the music sound? Unfortunately, much of the actual sound of biblical music has been lost to us. However, thanks to research done by Suzanne Haik-Vantoura and published in a 1991 book, we may be close to re-creating some of the ancient melodies. It is fairly complicated to explain in detail, but suffice it to say that Ms. Vantoura discovered that certain ancient Hebrew manuscripts of the Psalms which included additional markings directing the musicians what melodies to use and how to sing those melodies.

Other Songs of the Bible

The Bible contains other sections of poetry that were either sung at the time of their writing or have been set to music in years since. See if you can match the references to the Biblical songs:

- _____ Luke 2:14
- _____ Exodus 15:20-21
- _____ Numbers 21:17-18
- _____ Luke 1:68-79
- _____ Judges 5
- _____ Deuteronomy 31:31-32:52
- _____ Luke 2:28-32
- _____ 1 Samuel 2:1-10
- _____ Luke 1:46-55
- _____ Revelation 5:9-14

- a. Song at the well where God caused water to flow
- b. The song of the believers in heaven
- c. Miriam's song of victory over the Egyptians
- d. Song of the angels (*Gloria in Excelsis*)
- e. Deborah's song of victory over the Canaanites
- f. Moses' sings to teach the Israelites
- g. Hannah's song of thanks for the child God would give her
- h. Zacharias' song at John's birth (*Benedictus*)
- i. Mary's song when she greeted Elizabeth (*Magnificat*)
- j. Simeon's song when he held the Christ Child (*Nunc Dimittis*)

The Music of Salvation

Martin Luther once said that “next to theology, I give music the highest praise.” There is hardly a better way to express love, thankfulness, and praise to God than through music. There is hardly a better way to learn and impress Biblical truths on generations to come than through songs. Jesus gave His best to us on the cross. We give our best worship to Him. **It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, ² to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, ³ to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. ⁴ For you make me glad by your deeds, O LORD; I sing for joy at the works of your hands.** (Ps 92:1-4)

Resources

Manners and Customs of Bible Lands by Fred H. Wight

Compiled by D. Schaller, www.redeemerclc.org