

THEN SINGS MY SOUL | *Capturing the spirit of worship from the Psalms for Today*

Lesson 10 | The Hallel (type) Songs We Sing

In last quarter's Psalms study, we studied two primary Psalm structures, lament and praise, and grouped them in the following groups: Hallelujah Psalms, Lament, Confidence, Thanksgiving, Historical, Wisdom, Penitential/Imprecatory, Messianic, Hallel and Shepherd Psalms. In this lesson, we will consider the modern songs we sing that mirror the Hallel Psalms.

Psalms 113 to 118 are grouped together in the Psalter and called the HALLEL Psalms. Literally, hallel means "praise" and is a collection of Psalms that are typically sung where the final verses (118:21) are repeated twice. While it is unknown if the Psalter's collector intentionally grouped them as one unit, they have been purposed by usage as a unique book of seven for liturgical purposes. Essentially, they are expressions of thanksgiving and joy for divine redemption. And it was the Jewish practice to pinpoint their use for specific application to feast days.

The "full" Hallel, consisting of Psalms 113–118, is chanted in the synagogue on Feast of Tabernacles (or, Sukkot), Festival of Lights (or, Hanukkah), the first day of *Passover (the first two days in the Diaspora), Feast of Weeks (or, Shavu'Ot) and used today in many synagogues for other days of interest for National Israel. But for our interests in this class, Hallel was recited during Passover and is also known as "Egyptian Hallel" (or, Hallel Mizri) because of the nation's exodus which the Divinely planned meal commemorated in every generation. The second part, or the "half" Hallel, was recited in the synagogue on the New Moon and on the last six days of Passover. In the context of the Passover celebration, Psalms 113 and 114 typically would have been sung before the Passover meal and Psalms 115-118 would have been sung afterward.

As a result, it is most likely these were the psalms that Jesus and his disciples sang after the Last Supper, a Passover meal, before their retirement to the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus' later arrest (Matthew 26:30). These psalms reminded Israel of their dependence upon Yahweh who rescued them from slavery and by their historic use, were specific for use in the worship order of these feast – particularly the Passover.

Of course, as Christians, the night prior to His crucifixion upon which our lives are transfixed is the establishment of the Lord's Supper – the new Passover meal, of sorts, that identify the meaning of His sacrifice through the symbols of unleavened bread – the body of His sacrifice – and the fruit of the vine – the blood of His covenant. So the first application of worshipping today in the spirit of the Psalter's Hallel's would naturally be the songs we sing to celebrate this new feast Jesus established for Christians as a memorial of our Passover Lamb.

Come, Share the Lord | Brian J. Leech (1931-2015). Some hymns seem to flow immediately from the author's pen, while others require months of gestation. The latter is the case with this. A native of Buckhurst Hill, Essex, England, who moved to the United States in 1955, Mr. Leech, an evangelical minister who has composed over 500 songs, hymns, anthems and cantatas, provides us with his story on his struggle to compose the text of this hymn:

"In the autumn of 1982, I made an inner resolve to write a communion anthem and promptly forgot about it. During Christmas with my family in England, I invented a melody at the piano, but my mind was barren of any lyric ideas.

One hot summer day, while visiting a musician friend in Simi Valley, Calif., I played the setting and asked him to react to it. After repeating it, he thought a moment and then said, 'It's obvious: Holy Communion.' I went home and within an hour the words were complete. In the anthem arrangement by Roland Tabell it has become my most popular song to date." Sharing the Lord's Supper is a response to the "burning in our hearts" for the love of Christ who "makes us one." He did not recognize his talent for writing hymns until his mid-thirties. He went on to compose more than 500 hymns and spiritual songs.

Furthermore, this is a table where we "find... forgiveness" and "we in turn forgive all wrongs." And the author reminds us He is a Risen Savior with, "He joins us here, he breaks the bread/ the Lord who pours the cup is risen

We gather here
In Jesus' name
His love is burning in our hearts like living flame
For thru his loving son
The father makes us one
Come take the bread, Come drink the wine, Come share the Lord.

No one is stranger here
Ev'ry one belongs,
Finding our forgiveness here
We in turn forgive all wrongs

He joins us here
He breaks the bread
The Lord who pours the cup is risen from the dead
The one we love the most, is now our gracious host
Come take the bread, Come drink the wine, Come share the Lord.

We are now a family,
Of which the Lord is head,
Though unseen He meets us here,
In the breaking of the bread.

We'll gather soon,
Where angels sing,
We'll see the glory of our Lord and coming King,
Now we anticipate,
The feast for which we wait,
Come take the bread, Come drink the wine, Come share the Lord.

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'Tis midnight, and on Olive's brow
The star is dimmed that lately shone;
'Tis midnight, in the garden now
The suffering Saviour prays alone.

'Tis midnight, and from all removed
Emmanuel wrestles lone with fears;
E'en the disciple whom He loved
Heeds not his Master's grief and tears.

'Tis midnight, and for others' guilt
The Man of Sorrows weeps in blood;
Yet He who hath in anguish knelt
Is not forsaken by His God.

'Tis midnight, and from ether plains
Is borne the song that angels know;
Unheard by mortals are the strains
That sweetly soothe the Saviour's woe.

from the dead." It is the beginning point to which we identify as Christians because it was the single cosmic event to which all history was looking to – and the event to which all history looked back. We share the meal with Christ in the midst of our present and “we anticipate the feast for which we wait” in the future. It reminds us – all at once – of everything we are.

Tis Midnight and on Olive's Brow | William B. Tappan (1794-1849).

While midnight today refers to 12:00 a.m., the ancients usually marked time by the course of the sun through the sky and midnight for them was the approximate mid-point between sunset and sunrise. In the dark night hours, the trying time of Jesus was only beginning. The night of His suffering began in the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives where He had gone to pray. Jesus wept and prayed for “this cup to pass” but decisively submitted Himself to do the Father's will (Matthew 26:39). “He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

William Tappan has given us a hymn about that. First, a clockmaker, and then a preacher, he preached in America and was a Bible class teacher. He published ten books of poetry, and a few of his poems were turned into hymns. Sadly, he died of cholera at the age of fifty-five.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross | Isaac Watts (1674-1748).

Regarded to be the founder of English Hymnody, Isaac Watts was born in England. While his training in Greek, Latin and Hebrew would have allowed him the opportunity to become an Anglican priest, he chose to minister a church regarding to be a dissenting congregation. At the time, English hymns were very metered with a rigid pattern of beat. By the time of his death, he had planted the seeds of a much more complex hymnody with some 600 hymns in seven collections that made the transition to a freer, theologically-based hymnody.

Watts wanted new hymns to echo sermon themes and express “the gospel of the New Testament” and not be merely supplements to the Psalms; He wanted hymns to be freely composed from the feelings rather than mere recitations of Scripture of event of the distant past.

At the age of eighteen Watts was one day ridiculing some of the poor hymns then sung in the churches, when his father said to him, sarcastically, “Make some yourself, then.” Accordingly, Watts set himself to writing a hymn, and produce the lines beginning: “Behold the glories of the Lamb.” That was the start of his eminent career as a hymn-writer. However, by 1705, an illness side-tracked his work as a minister and for thirty-six years he remained at the home of Sir Thomas Abbey at Theobaldo [in England], continuing his hymn-writing, which had reached its highest expression in this hymn, based on Paul's words, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There is the story that after this hymn had been sung in the Church of Saint Edmund, London, Father Ignatius repeated to his congregation the last two lines of the hymn impressively—“Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.” And then he added: “Well, I am surprised to hear you sing that. Do you know that altogether you put only fifteen shillings in the collection bag this morning?”

The event of the Cross – to which this hymn celebrates – is the heart of our worship together to remember Christ in memorial until He comes and to examine self (1Corinthians 11:27-32).

Christ We Do All Adore Thee | A Latin Hymn, tr. Theofore Baker (1851-1934). Music by Théodore DuBois (1837-1924). This hymn has an interesting story. It is actually the final movement from an oratory called, “The Seven Last Words of Christ” written in 1867 by Théodore Dubois (Hymnary.org). The text, however, is a very old one, from the Roman Catholic liturgy. A search of the extensive CANTUS database, a primary research tool for study of the sources of Gregorian chant, *reveals hundreds of instances of this text*, usually as an antiphonal (two

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

*His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;
Then I am dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.*

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

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choirs sing in response to each other) piece of music and occasionally as a responsory (begun by the priest and continued by congregation). Some have found the text as early as AD 990, from the St. Gall monastery in Switzerland.

Our English translation is by Theodore Baker (1851-1934), one of the first generation of American musicologists and the founder of the popular Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians. His other well-known hymn translations are "We gather together" and the lovely German Christmas carol, "Lo, how a rose e'er blooming." ("Baker") His rendering is very nearly word-for-word:

Christ, we do all adore Thee,
and we do praise Thee forever.
Christ, we do all adore Thee,
and we do praise Thee forever.
For on the holy cross
Thou hast the world from sin redeemed.
Christ, we do all adore Thee,
and we do praise Thee forever.
Christ, we do all adore Thee.

It is hard to know what to say about such a simple and powerful text. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:19, "Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue." **Less can be more** if it is well-chosen and carefully presented. This hymn contains only twelve words in the original language, and only two dozen words in English. There has been a running joke recently about contemporary worship music with this kind of text--the "7-11 song," seven words repeated eleven times--but **this hymn is proof that if you really know what you are doing, you can create a masterpiece.**

Adoration is the object of the hymn – the adorations of the Christ. Adoration comes from the realization that before the Infinite God we should stand ashamed for our sinfulness. It is something we do, as well as something we feel; it is an attitude of heart and mind, deliberately acknowledged and applied to its object. Christ is no less complete without our adoration, but we are less complete if we do not give it. The natural result, as the rest of the line says, is that "we do praise Thee forever."

O Sacred Head | Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), tr., Paul Gerhardt into German. The words to this most

O sacred head! now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down;
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, thine only crown;
How art Thou pale with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn;
How does that visage languish
That once was bright as morn!

What language shall I borrow
To thank Thee dearest Friend,
For This Thy dying sorrow,
Thy Pity without end?
O make me Thine forever,
And should I fainting be,
Lord let me never, never
Outlive my love to Thee!

beautiful hymn were penned by Bernard of Clairvaux who founded the Cistercian order of monks in the early 12th century. The words come from his poem *Salve Mundi Salutare*. The poem had seven sections, each focusing on a different part of Jesus' body: his feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart and head. Paul Gerhardt, a German hymn writer from the 1600s, translated the last section of the seven from Latin into German. And to my knowledge, this is the only hymn we sing in English that he has translated.

Paul Gerhardt was a great 17th century German hymn writer who struggled through numerous unfortunate events including the death of his wife and children as well as his removal from the Lutheran church, though he was to return. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), which tested people's belief in God and Christianity, had a profound impact on hymn writing, including Gerhardt's. After the war, the reliance on an omnipotent God for comfort and consolation was written in the hymns of this period producing expressions of Christian devotion and individual

self-consciousness, as noted by hymnologist William J. Reynolds. Several men have been credited for the translation into English.

Originally this melody was set to a secular love song entitled "Mein gemüth ist mir verwirret" (My heart is distracted by a gentle maid). Hymnologist Linda Jo McKim notes that it first appeared with the Gerhardt text in *Praxis Pietatis Melica* (1656) and has been associated with the text ever since. John Sebastian Bach used the melody five times throughout his cantata, *St. Matthew's Passion*. Apparently, he loved the tune, because he also used it in five other cantatas and in his Christmas Oratorio.

One only has to review the words of the hymn to see the suffering of the Savior: wounded, grief, shame, scorn, thorns, pale with anguish, sore abuse, scorn, languish.... Then the words of the worshipper: thank my friend, your pity (for me) without end, Make me Thine forever, May I never outlive my love to Thee. The hymn perfectly connects the hearts of the Saved to the Savior with the meaning of the Cross and the direction the Cross intends to push us: **forward and upward.**