

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

Lesson 9 | The Messianic (Hope) 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 Messianic Psalms.

Messianic Psalms were psalms that emphasized the anointed King after the line of David (Psalms 89; 132; cf. 2Samuel 7). Many of these point to the One King who will rule the world with a rod of iron (i.e. Messianic) while some were more interested in their present (Royal) and the events of the history (Enthronement), Messianic psalms speak with hope through David (the ideal king, cf. 2 Ki. 25:27-30) of the coming Messiah in a Messianic world. Jesus said there were Psalms that spoke of Him – not just David and not just the LORD (Lk. 24:44). And specific psalms are designated as Messianic by inspired New Testament writers. That is, a “this is that” idea where the speaker applies the Psalm as fulfilled with Jesus in mind. Clearly, the Hebrews writer applied Psalm 110 to Jesus who alone could fulfill the role of priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6; 7:17,21) just as he also applies the Son of Psalm 2 to Jesus (Hebrews 5:5). Even Peter quotes Psalm 110 as the explanation of what God had accomplished in Jesus as King (Acts 2:34-36) – as well as Psalm 16. While many of these Messianic psalms paint a chilling picture (Psalm 22), they also point to a brighter day and a better world where “Blessed are all they that take refuge in him” (Psa. 2:10-12).

So, for Christian songs, the hope we have is in what the realized Christ has accomplished and what the Christ has promised:

- *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:1-3).*
- *“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven...” (Luke 6:23).*
- *“You have come to the church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven...” (Hebrews 12:23).*

The reason for our hope is what Christ accomplished and what He promised. So the collection we have for songs to consider are songs of heaven, or songs exhorting us to be prepared for heaven.

How Long till the Morning? | C.E. (Charlotte) Couchman. Mrs. Couchman is a Christian who lives in Colorado and has written several song texts and harmonies as well.

This hymn compares the life we live as Christians to the night. The first verse showcases the cloudless joy of morning after the evening storm. Then in verse two, the dark battle of saints drums for courage to last until the Lord raises the banner in the morning. And last, the full life of the Christian's struggle and turmoil that will find it's bright reward at resurrection morning when we rise to meet Christ “in the morning.”

Consider the mornings of this mortal land,
Each a new beginning from the Maker's hand.
While the storms may gather 'gainst the evening sky,
The day breaks cloudless in the morning.

Rise up to the battles, for the skies dawn clear;
Let us gather courage while the foe draws near.
Though the night falls weary, saints of God, march on!
And He'll raise our banner in the morning.

When the trumpet sounds to signal heaven's day –
Resurrection morning when the dead shall wake –
What a glorious gathering when the Lord descends
And we rise to meet Him in the morning.

How long (my Lord) till we see the morning?
How long (my Lord) till we see Your face?
O my Lord (my Lord) guide us through our troubles
Till we rise above them in the morning.

Several Scriptural references are seen in the song with the shout of joy in the morning (Psalm 30:5, Lamentations 3:23, v.1); the battle against darkness (Jeremiah 49:14, v.2); the final coming of the Lord (1Thessalonians 4:16-17, v.3) and the chorus of saints calling for redemption and judgment (Revelation 6:10). Each of the passages exude the hope of Messiah. He will redeem the people. He will judge the sinner. And He will usher in the new day of hope that God has promised.

Won't it be wonderful there? | James Rowe (1865-1933). Although born in England, James came to America in 1890. He worked for 10 years for the New York Central & Hudson R.R. Co., and then served for 12 years as superintendent of the Mohawk and Hudson River Humane Society. He began writing songs and hymns about 1896 and was a prolific writer of gospel verse with more than 9,000 published hymns, poems, recitations, and other works.

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When with the Savior we enter the glory land
Won't it be wonderful there?
Ended the troubles and cares of the story land
Won't it be wonderful there?

Chorus:

Won't it be wonderful there
Having no burdens to bear
Joyously singing, with heartbells all ringing
Won't it be wonderful there?

Walking and talking with Christ, the Supernal One
Won't it be wonderful there
Praising, adoring the Matchless Eternal One
Won't it be wonderful there?

There where the tempest will never be sweeping us
Won't it be wonderful there
Sure that forever the Lord will be keeping us
Won't it be wonderful there?

The tune was composed by Homer Franklin Morris (1875-1955). Reared in Georgia, he attended public schools there and developed a keen interest in music, pursuing that study with many of the leading teachers of that day.

Like many songs, there is intentional repetition asking the question, "Won't it be Wonderful?" to instill in the heart of the worshipper the idea the poet wants to place just as the hymn, "I'll fly away" does in the chorus (a musical motif even common in Hebrew poetry, c.f. Psalm 136). Yet, the chorus sings of the joy and praise for the burden free, heart freeing, joyous praise in heaven. Oh, won't it be wonderful there?

On Zion's Glorious Summit | John Kent (1766-1843). This beautiful hymn was written many years ago by an English shipwright by the name of John Kent. Hymnary.org says that, "as a working shipwright his opportunities for acquiring the education and polish necessary for the

production of refined verse were naturally limited. His hymns are strongly worded, very earnest and simple, and intensely Calvinistic." Despite his limited education, he published more than 200 hymns during his lifetime.

When you read the words to this song, replace the word Zion with heaven and it will make the song come alive for you. For those who know the Lord, this song expresses the emotions stirred up by Scripture passages such as Revelation 5:11-12 and 7:9-10. What a great reunion that will be when Christians from different times, cultures, and languages join together to sing the praises of Jesus!

The tune was composed by Robert Skene (19th century) about whom we know very little. Some suggest that he was connected to the Benjamin Skene, a longtime advocate of religious reform who died in 1859 and whose obituary was given ample space in the April issue of Alexander Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger* that year. This melody, which may date from 1869, was first published in the 1872 New Harp of Zion, edited by A. D. and J. H. Fillmore with an abbreviated form of the Sanctus. The full version of the Sanctus is found in Hermon: A New Collection of Sacred Music, published in 1873 by Rigdon McCoy McIntosh.

On Zion's glorious summit stood
A numerous host redeemed by blood!
They hymned their king in strains divine;
I heard the song and strove to join,
I heard the song and strove to join.

Here all who suffered sword or flame
For truth, or Jesus' lovely name,
Shout victory now and hail the Lamb,
And bow before the great I AM,
And bow before the great I AM.

While everlasting ages roll,
Eternal love shall feast their soul,
And scenes of bliss, for ever new,
Rise in succession to their view,
Rise in succession to their view.

Sanctus (after last verse):
Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of hosts, on high adored!
Who like me Thy praise should sing,
O Almighty King!
Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of hosts, on high adored!
Holy, holy, holy.

Some glad morning when this life is o'er,
I'll fly away.
To a home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away.

I'll fly away, O Glory,
I'll fly away.
When I die, Hallelujah, by and by,
I'll fly away.

When the shadows of this life have flown,
I'll fly away.
Like a bird from prison bars have flown,
I'll fly away.

Just a few more weary days and then,
I'll fly away.
To a land where joy shall never end,
I'll fly away.

I'll Fly Away | Albert Brumley. Albert E. Brumley has been described as the "pre-eminent gospel songwriter" of the 20th century with over 600 published songs. According to interviews, Brumley came up with the idea for "I'll Fly Away" while picking cotton on his father's farm in Rock Island, Oklahoma. He said that as he worked he was "humming the old ballad that went like this: 'If I had the wings of an angel, over these prison walls I would fly,' and suddenly it dawned on me that I could use this plot for a gospel-type song."

It was an additional three years later until Brumley worked out the rest of the song, paraphrasing one line from the secular ballad to read, "Like a bird from prison bars has flown" using prison as an analogy for earthly life. Brumley has stated, "When I wrote it, I had no idea that it would become so universally popular."