

THE FATHER'S SONG



The Divine Symphony
of Scripture

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Please excuse the typos inside. These chapters were reformatted from blog posts with minimal proof reading, and therefore carried forward errors in the original posts.

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INTRODUCTION

*“The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save...
He will exult over you with loud singing”
(Zephaniah 3:17).*

One divine melody permeates the grand narrative of Scripture. In this creative overview of the Bible, we’ll train our “ears to hear” the penetrating God-beat at the center of redemption history.

The story of the Bible sweeps and flows, builds and develops like a masterful

musical piece with many movements. From the explosive energy of the opening of Creation, to the somber sounds of Sin and Lament along the way, the song rises and falls and rises again to the grand crescendo at the end.

Leave the dissonance of the world and join the Dance of the Trinity as we learn to live and dance in step with the “unforced rhythms of grace” (Matthew 11 *The Message*).



1

DANCE OF THE TRINITY (GOD)

“In the beginning was the Word...”

(John 1:1)

We’re all familiar with the hauntingly beautiful yet strange and mysterious beginning of John’s Gospel where he describes the mystery of the incarnation. Jesus, the Son, here called “the Word” is in the beginning “with God” and, in some shocking sense, “is God.”

John is peering back into the mysteries of the ages and painting a portrait of the God who exists as a “being in community,” the Holy Trinity — the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Curious teenagers just beginning to wrestle with the idea of God often raise the question, “What did the eternal, always existing God do before He created the universe? I mean, what a boring existence!” While we should not be too cavalier in our speculation on such matters, I believe the best answer to the question is to simply say: *God danced*.

Yes, God has always been dancing. The early church probed deeply into the inner realities of the trinitarian life and used the Greek word *perichoresis* to describe the “dance of mutual indwelling” between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For all of time and before time as we know it came into being,

“The Father, Son and Spirit have lived in an eternal, joyful, vibrant dance of love and honor, rhythm and harmony, grace and beauty, giving and receiving” (Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 147).

Careful readers of the Bible understand that love is not just something God does, love is the essence of who God *is* — “*God is love.*” What was there before God brought the world into existence?

Please scrap your images of a lonely God hovering over a dark, silent abyss, bored and looking for something to do. The universe did not spring into existence in order to give God something to do; rather, the universe was created to give further expression to the rich, vibrant, society of love and creativity that already existed within the trinitarian community of the Godhead.

The greatest joys of life are meant to be shared with an ever increasing number of participants. “The more, the merrier” may be one of the oldest, greatest truths of the universe. The irresistible Dance of the Trinity, full of life and joy, overflowing with love and goodness, could not contain itself and it was only a matter of time before God expanded the scope of the dance and extended the guest list.

In the beginning God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—danced in perfect step with one another. In the beginning was perfect rhythm and harmony.

What then of the *logos*? The Greek philosophical concept of the “logos” came to refer to the source and fundamental order of the cosmos; the DNA of the universe; or the divine mind or reason that guides, organizes and gives purpose and meaning to everything.

The Bible gives the divine mind a name, Jesus Christ, who together in concert with the Father and the Spirit composed

together the divine opus, the masterpiece of the ages, the soundtrack that makes all things dance in perfect rhythm with the Triune God.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Col 1:15-16).

In summary, before we even reach Genesis 1:1 we have heard the opening notes of the Father’s Song. Each measure, every perfectly struck note, each beautiful melody springs forth from the perfect harmony of inter-relational love and mutual giving and receiving—the Dance—shared among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Father’s Song had no beginning and will have no end. The song abides within the Godhead and cannot be separated from

Him. On the other hand, the Father's Song can be shared with those outside the Godhead. "The more, the merrier." We'll save that part of the song for next time.



2

THE SONG OF CREATION (CREATION)

The Creator could have chosen an infinite number of methods to bring the universe into being. God chose to sing.

Well, we don't know if God actually sang, but the creation narratives make plain that the first stars, moons, trees, oceans, platypuses and people danced into existence through the

spoken word of God. (“And the Lord said...and it was so.”)

Scholars are quick to point out that Genesis 1 has a clear poetic rhythm, a certain beat, cadence or ancient groove. Unfortunately contemporary readers often tend to impose rigid, lifeless, “just-give-me-the-facts” scientific interpretations on this rich rhythmic narrative. All the heated debates over dating and the fossil record can deafen one’s ears to the sheer beauty of the creation song.

Like a pebble striking a glassy pond and rippling outward, the pulsating energy and mutual love of the Trinitarian dance struck the cosmic void with a decisive chord of creative power that began the rippling effects of those first six days.

The poem slowly builds in tempo and tone, from the quiet sounds of the Spirit hovering over the deep to the energetic flashes of light and syncopated splashes of the sea.

The song's thin melody grows fuller as new life fills sea, sky and land with each passing day. The creeping of the crawlers builds to the march of the beasts of land and sea. The suspense grows and the volume increases. The angelic choirs join the Divine Trio, adding texture and depth as the creative music builds to the grand crescendo of the sixth day.

Every note, every melody of the Father's Song has been leading the attentive ear to this shocking, show-stopping lyric: "*Let us create man in Our image, according to Our likeness*" (Gen 1:26).

And all heaven was silent. Awe fell over the angelic hosts. The perfect harmony shared between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit could not be contained. A dance this perfect, a song this sweet, a love this strong spilled over and echoed out beyond the perfect trinitarian fellowship. And so God created human beings in his image—His triune, inter-relational image. But why?

I believe the only adequate answer is: We were created to join the Dance of the Trinity. We were created to join the angels in singing the Father's Song. We were made to join the symphony of God's holy, creative, life-giving, relational love.

We are all *instruments* of God in the deepest, truest sense. We are created "in the image of God"—we might say "in tune with God"—in order to perform the Father's Song with our lives as we walk in rhythm with God.

The song's opening measures were absolutely flawless: "And God saw all that He had made and it was very good." For a blissful moment the first human couple enjoyed a life of perfect harmony (or "Shalom") with the earth, with each another, with themselves and with their God.

But the Father's Song would soon take a tragic turn as God's instruments so went so quickly out of tune.



3

COSMIC DISSONANCE (SIN)

Since the creation of the world God's perfect melody, the Father's Song, has been clearly heard, it's harmonious rhythms and soothing beats echoing forth from all that God has made, so that people are without excuse.

For although we knew the Father's Song—which is written on our hearts—we chose to deafen our ears and tune our hearts to

humanly authored songs far inferior. We have exchanged a life swept up in the embrace of the trinitarian dance, living in perfect harmony with the great Composer, for a life of whistling alone in the dark or making up half-baked ditties in the shower. We have all left the Father's band in order to try our luck in a solo career and are failing miserably. Or, as Paul puts it:

“Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal human beings and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over” (Romans 1).

We've gone tone deaf. Our lives are out of tune. We've misplaced or, worse, crumpled and tossed the Composers sheet music and are scrambling to improvise. God created the world to be a magnificent symphony made up of instruments from every tribe, tongue and nation.

Only a few chapters into Genesis and God's cosmic symphony sounds more like a Friday night "Battle of the Bands" at a rock festival. Everyone is trying to top the other by playing louder and better. The world is a mosh pit, people are slam dancing, bodies are flailing and many are getting hurt.

The Fall of humankind into sin in Genesis 3 marks the pivotal moment in history when the perfect melody of the Father's Song was abruptly shattered by the first misplayed note, the first mis-struck chord. "Sin" (*harmartia* in Greek) means literally "missing the mark" or, sticking to our theme,

“living out of tune with God.” The result of that first sin was total, utter *cosmic dissonance*.

The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines “dissonance” as “a tension or clash resulting from the combination of two disharmonious elements.” The rest of the biblical narrative, from Genesis to Revelation, is the story of ongoing dissonance resulting from God’s creatures insisting on playing to a different tune than their Creator, dancing to the beat of their own drummer, and God’s relentless attempts to bring all creation back into harmony with the Father’s Song.

The story eventually gets there, but for now we must pause and swallow the devastating words: “Therefore God gave them over...” (Romans 1). We must endure the ear-piercing noise of a creation of “noisy gongs and clashing cymbals” (1 Cor. 13) whose revolt resulted in (1) ears deafened to the Father’s Song (separation from God) and (2) many

voices singing out of tune and competing with each other for center stage (relational strife).

The Father's Song would fade into the background for some time, barely detectable amidst the growing cacophony of competing choruses that grew out of the Fall. (Just read Genesis 4-11 to get a glimpse of the noise.)

Yet, no matter how entrenched a person might be in the beat and groove of another song, they are never more than a divine moment away from being arrested again by the sweet sound of God's creative, restorative grace—the Father's Song. Next chapter we'll meet one such man: Abraham.



4

ONE MAN WHISTLING (ABRAHAM)

A man sat at a metro station in Washington DC and started to play the violin; it was a cold January morning. He played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, since it was rush hour, it was calculated that thousands of people went through the station, most of them on their way to work.

Three minutes went by and a middle aged man noticed there was musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried up to meet his schedule. A minute later, the violinist received his first dollar tip: a woman threw the money in the till and without stopping continued to walk.

A few minutes later, someone leaned against the wall to listen to him, but the man looked at his watch and started to walk again. Clearly he was late for work. The one who paid the most attention was a 3 year old boy. His mother tagged him along, hurried but the kid stopped to look at the violinist.

In the 45 minutes the musician played, only 6 people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 gave him money but continued to walk their normal pace. He collected \$32. When he finished playing and silence took over, no one noticed it. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition.

No one knew this but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the top musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces ever written with a violin worth 3.5 million dollars. Two days before his playing in the subway, Joshua Bell sold out at a theater in Boston and the seats average \$100 (original story from *The Washington Post*, April 4, 2007).

This oft-told story illustrates, among other things, that the familiar sites, sounds and set patterns of our everyday lives can deafen us to the quiet, unforced rhythms of Beauty's song patiently singing in the background of our static-filled lives.

The Father's Song, having sung the entire creation into being only chapters earlier in the Biblical narrative, has now slipped into the background of a world spiraling into a sin-filled cosmic cacophony of competing songs and dances.

What is the great Composer to do when his instruments so defiantly refuse to perform

His song? They not only deafen their hearts to His song, but far worse, they choose to compose their own songs and gather around them other inferior composers (i.e., idolatry).

The ancient Near Eastern world of the patriarchs (second millennium BCE) is a diverse religious landscape of the various gods, temples, sacrifices, rites, rituals, and myths of the Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, etc. The Creator God, much like Joshua Bell with his violin in the DC metro station, chose an ordinary place in the bustling center of ancient Ur (modern day Iraq) and continued to perform and sing that ancient melody that once sing the universe into being, waiting patiently for “anyone who has ears to hear” (Jesus).

At just the right time, just the right chord struck just the right ear and set into motion God’s grand project to bring all creation back into harmony with the Father’s Song. His name was Abram.

Can you imagine the day he came home to his wife Sarai and shared with her that he heard the Voice that spoke the world into existence speak to him? Not only did he speak, but He had given them very specific instructions: “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you” (Gen. 12:1).

In other words, “Make a clean break with your current life, your current culture, your current gods—your current daily dance. From now on, your future will be guided by the purposes of my will. From this day forward you’ll be my chosen instrument to perform My Song, and “through you all peoples on earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:3) as they come to know “The Father’s Song.”

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I

will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. So Abram left, as the Lord had told him...and they set out for the land of Canaan” (Gen. 12:2-4).

One man’s heart was captured by that irresistible Song, and he went immediately on his way, one man whistling alone in the dark — or, shall we say, for the first time walking in the Light?

Questions for Reflection

1. How often does the noise of our daily routine drown out the attempts of God’s gentle Spirit to speak to us?
2. What are the popular “cultural songs” that tend to shape and guide our daily rhythms?

3. How about “The American Dream?” Is this a song driving our lives? Is it consistent with The Father’s Song?
4. Have you had a divine, life-changing moment when you first heard God’s voice calling you to a different life?
5. What lessons can we learn from Abram about obedience, sacrifice, repentance and faith?



5

A MASTERPIECE IN STONE (TORAH)

The crowds came with great anticipation to the mountain amphitheater. Many great and awesome rumors preceded the night's long awaited spectacle. Days of preparations were required to get things ready for the big show. When the moment finally arrived, a heavy darkness covered the entire place.

A great silence fell over everyone.

Soon the entire place was wrapped in smoke, as the lead singer of the band descended from the rafters upon the smoke-filled stage with a fiery flash of pyrotechnic genius. Suddenly the whole place began to shake violently as the pulsating bass beat and amplified drums grew louder and louder until they reached the climactic moment when the full band appeared upon the stage in wild flashes of colorful light and began to perform their mega-hit single.

This description of an outdoor rock concert at Red Rocks amphitheater in the mountains of Colorado has much the same description as the grand spectacle that occurred at Mount Sinai some 3,400 years ago.

Exodus 19 describes a crowd of people who after days of preparation “took their stand at the foot of the mountain” (v. 17), the mountain “was wrapped in smoke” and the Lord “descended upon it in fire” (v. 18), and “the whole mountain shook violently” (v. 18)

as “the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder” (v. 19) all building up to one of the most climactic moments of history when the voice of God Almighty “spoke to Moses in thunder” (v. 19).

Sinai marked the great unveiling. It is the great unveiling of the Great Composers masterpiece, “The Father’s Song.” Divine lyrics of old originally etched upon the human heart made in God’s image were largely forgotten from the Fall, but here at Sinai were plainly revealed verbally to God’s people through Moses and written on stone tablets for subsequent generations to preserve, practice and perform.

God’s Law, or *Torah*, is the priceless gift of the Composer’s original sheet music, written by His very hand and given to his people to learn to perform with their lives. Just as the musician follows the cues of the notes on the pages to perform a musical piece well, so God has given us His written Law to perform

well in life and our relationships with God and others.

There is a great difference between the person who can whistle a few lines from Beethoven's *Ninth* in the shower and the professional instrumentalist who owns the sheet music, has studied and mastered the full piece, knowing backwards and forwards every note, measure, pause, breath and rest.

What great joy must accompany the well trained musician as mere notes on a page are brought magically to life with their instrument as they follow it's cues.

May we make sweet music with our lives as we learn to play The Father's Song by diligently studying and practicing every morsel of wisdom and truth found in His perfect Law.

"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long...How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my

mouth!...Your decrees are the theme of my song wherever I lodge” (Psalm 119).

Questions for Reflection

1. Have we tamed God’s Word and lost a sense of it’s power?
2. How does the Sinai scene portray the nature of God’s revelation?
3. Do we view God’s Word as sheet music to be mastered and performed with our lives? Or, are we more interested in selecting warm, fuzzy phrases to make us feel better in the moment?
4. Read Psalm 119 and ask God to stir in you a greater hunger, love and desire for God’s Word.



6

40 YEAR BAND REHEARSAL (MOSES)

I spent several years substitute teaching in the public schools to pay my way through seminary. Substitute teaching is not for the faint of heart. In order to survive, you must have thick skin, the patience of a saint and the ability to give the impression that you're in control when you have absolutely none!

Some subs choose their classes carefully, avoiding certain subjects and grade

levels that will prove more difficult than others. For example, library monitor or 10th grade history are two safe choices. The first you just read a book and occasionally remind the children to “use inside voices.” The second you usually pop in a History Channel video and hit play. Other subs live a bit more on the wild side. Perhaps the boldest of them all is the 6th grade band sub with no band experience.

I’ll never forget the day I walked into the band room expecting to show *The Music Man* or some other movie but instead found a conductor’s baton and detailed instructions on which musical pieces to lead the class through!

If I could describe the scene you would see and hear 30 wild 12-year olds each trying to out “blast” their neighbor. Crazy Carl on the gong, Wild Willy on the cymbals, Sassy Sue and her crew on the ear-piercing flutes, Big Bobby on the Baritone and Terrible Tom on the tuba making the floor shake with his deep blasts.

Warm up was literally the sound of 30 different instruments playing 30 different songs or scales at the same time. When it came time to rehearse, there was poor me, alone in the front, waving my baton around like a man on the verge of meltdown, desperately trying to get everybody playing together the same tune.

In the previous chapter, the Great Composer led his people to Mount Sinai where He graciously wrote down his divine masterpiece—the *Torah*—and delivered it into the hands of His chosen conductor, Moses. For the next 40 years Moses stood at the head God’s chosen people with his baton (or staff) in hand, trying his best to get God’s chosen people, or instruments (who often display the spiritual maturity of 6th graders!), to play together the “Father’s Song.” (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy give us a detailed account of this chaotic, ear-piercing 40-year long band rehearsal.)

This image of a frustrated band conductor waving his baton hopelessly in front of a stubborn or “stiff-necked people” (Deut. 9:13) does not end with Moses, however. The noisy rehearsal continues under the leadership of Joshua and the various judges of Israel. The Book of Judges introduces readers to a series of conductors—Deborah, Gideon,

Jephthah and the others—who all attempt to get God’s disgruntled classroom under control and with no avail. As Old Testament scholar David Howard puts it:

“As the book unfolds, readers encounter shocking accounts of violence, sexual abuse, idolatry, and misuse of power. Before the book is over, gruesome scenes of bodily mutilation and dismemberment are disclosed.”

What is a poor substitute band teacher to do in such a situation? What sort of note does he

leave on the desk for the returning teacher? What one sentence summary aptly describes the overall classroom behavior? The Book of Judges provides one:

“At that time there was no teacher in the classroom. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25 my paraphrase).

Who might God send out from the office to take control of this unruly classroom? Keep reading to find out.



7

BEFORE AMERICAN IDOL (SAUL)

The Patriarchal and theocratic years of the Old Testament (Genesis-Judges) have provided the first several musical tracks of the Father's Song. So far we have caught a glimpse of the eternal, harmonious dance of the Trinity before the creation of the world, and witnessed the Father singing the world and humanity into existence.

We saw our first human ancestors stray from the Creator's intended groove, starting their own amateur, out-of-tune band. Cosmic dissonance was the result (Fall). God's solution was to start over by forming a small band of people beginning with Abraham and his descendants who would live once again in the divine rhythms of the Father's Song.

Exodus through Judges has been one long, 40-year long, ear-piercing band rehearsal as God's people struggle to get in sync with each other and God. The book of Judges ends on a rather sour note reminiscent of a band on the verge of break-up.

Perhaps, they wonder, if we found the right lead man, we could turn this thing around and make it on the charts! Here's my paraphrase of Judges 21:25: "In those days Israel's band had no lead man; all the musicians played their own tune." At last, we now enter the era of the kings and the monarchy of Israel in our exploration of The Father's Song.

Long before there was American Idol, there were wandering, religious charismatics with significant tribal influence called “judges.” Gideon, Samson, Deborah, Barak and others came first. Then the prophet-judge Samuel begins the transition from the period of the judges to the monarchy of Israel.

Despite having received the written score of the Father’s Song at Sinai, Israel was unable to learn to live out the song on their own. They decided, against God’s will, they need a talented, charming, crowd-swaying lead guy to get the band back on track. They demand of their aging “producer” or “agent” Samuel: “Appoint for us a king to lead us *like all the nations*” (1 Sam. 8:5-6).

Both Samuel and God are grieved that they have rejected having God as their sole king and desire to be like the other nations by having a human king. Let’s remember that Israel’s sole purpose was to be *unlike* the other nations—a holy, set-apart people. They were to be God’s

instruments of bringing the Father's Song to a world dancing to their own self-destructive tunes.

Yet, God relents and honors their request. First Samuel then begins like the auditions for American Idol, and, for a crass and borderline blasphemous comparison, the prophet Samuel plays the role of Simon Cowell.

The first winner of Ancient Near Eastern Idol struts into the spotlight with remarkable stage presence and strikingly handsome appearance. Saul was tall, dark and handsome: "There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; he stood head and shoulders above everyone else" (1 Sam. 9:2). Saul is anointed Israel's first king and thus we begin the period of the kings of Israel.

Where does this significant development lead the still unfolding Father's Song? I would say the beautiful, angelic harmonies of the pre-creation dance of the

Trinity have long faded away by now. The dark, dissonance of Genesis 3 is still providing the bass line driving the beat.

Momentary flights and flourishes of pleasant chords surface at times during the Patriarchal period: the faith of Abraham, the righteousness of Noah, the leadership of Moses, the redemption march of the Exodus, Merriam's song of deliverance afterward, to name a few greatest hits.

But these are few and far between if we're reading the whole story and listening to the whole song. There is a much deeper problem at work. Sin has invaded the human heart and prevents any hope of getting back in tune with God and one another. We can vote for our favorite musician, put them on a stage and hope that they can help lead us back into the Father's Song; but they, too, are no match for sin's distorting noise.

Saul will not bring Israel into harmony with The Father's Song. His career fizzles far

before his time, like so many modern day rock legends. And what of his successor, David, who would become the most famous musical prodigy and lyricist of all time? Let's find out.



8

DAVID SINGS THE
NATIONAL ANTHEM
(DAVID)

The winner of the second season of the ancient Near Eastern version of American Idol was the electrifying, rags-to-riches shepherd boy from Bethlehem named David. (Though the word “idol” wouldn’t be used so flippantly among the Israelites!)

David’s first brush with stardom came after his defeat of the the giant Goliath. This

would be only the first in a long string of award-winning victories on the battlefield. David became a mighty warrior-king and violent battle imagery would be a prominent theme in many of his future hit singles. When he wasn't in battle, he managed to have a productive musical career as well as "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1).

Yet, let's stop for a moment to examine the great shift in mood that is taking place in this ongoing soundtrack to *The Father's Song*. If something like Handel's *Messiah* captures the majestic mood of God providentially moving history towards its goal of everlasting justice and universal "shalom"; then the background music to the violent, military sagas of David and his victories over national enemies in the early years of the monarchy sounds more like the tension-filled score to the movie *Gladiator*.

We come to the stories of David prejudiced and already having chosen our side. David fights for the "good guys" and the other

nations are the “bad guys.” We cheer and celebrate Israel’s victories and give God the glory. Yet, we must remember the larger goal, the foundational groove, of the Father’s Song we’ve been charting.

When the earth and everything in it is finally brought back into harmony with the Father’s Song, then the earth will resonate fully with God’s shalom, and there will be no more battle hymns or military victory marches necessary.

A couple centuries later, Isaiah will remind Israel of the ultimate restorative trajectory of the Father’s Song:

“They will beat their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).

“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 55:12).

But for now we must endure the battle songs, standing in awe at the gracious forbearance of our God who patiently moves His “peace plan” forward despite this violent, disharmonious portion of the song. The Father is still orchestrating His plan behind the scenes, working through His chosen yet imperfect nation, Israel, and her valiant hero, King David.

Israel becomes a powerful nation under David. And every nation has a national anthem to celebrate its foundational values. David is both Israel’s king and famed song writer, to whom many of the psalms are attributed. David’s life is defined by an inward conflict of interests. He is a man torn in two—both “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13:13) one

moment and a lying, cheating, adulterous murderer the next (2 Sam. 11).

Still, no place is David more conflicted and pulled in two directions than in the songs he writes and the rhythms that guide his life. Israel is God's chosen nation through whom He will bring the blessings of The Father's Song to the ends of the earth (Gen. 15).

David is Israel's anointed king, chosen to govern the nation according to the divine rhythms of The Father's Song. Yet, David's life and governance is a confusing mix of two seemingly irreconcilable songs. His life sounds like Amazing Grace one moment and like Rage Against the Machine the next.

Under David's kingship will Israel's national anthem be a violent song of self-aggrandizing military conquest over national enemies?

“Women sang to one another as they celebrated: ‘Saul has struck down his

thousands, and David his ten thousands.’ David had success in all his undertakings, for the Lord was with him...All Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them in battle” (1 Sam. 18:7, 14).

Or will Israel’s national anthem be one of rejoicing in the justice and peace that God has promised to bring to all nations through the people of Israel?

“How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel—the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? You have established your people Israel as your very own forever; and

you, O LORD, have become their God” (2 Sam 7:22-24).

History has proven time and time again that the purity and uniqueness of God’s Kingdom suffers whenever it is co-opted by worldly power-games, humanly guided political agendas and many forms of nationalism. So, let us also choose our life (and national) anthem carefully.



9

ISRAEL'S IPOD (PSALMS)

I have over 2,000 songs in my iTunes library. I also have a much smaller “Playlist” of all my favorites: songs that make me smile and move me to dancing, songs that evoke significant memories, songs I’ve shared with special friends, songs that comfort me and songs that move me to tears.

Skimming through another person's music collection can often give you a small window into that person's soul.

By God's grace the ancient "Favorites Playlist" of Israel has been preserved for us in the 150 song collection we call the Psalms. We have in the middle of our Bibles essentially the iPod of the ancient Israelite people. This collection of 150 songs includes hymns for holy days, community laments, individual laments, songs of pious persons, thank-offering songs, royal songs and more.

They were written by the community and for the community of Israel. Many are attributed to individuals such as David and Asaph. They are the raw, unfiltered poetic scribbles and lyrical expressions of man's search for God amidst all the struggles common to man. In the words of C. Hassell Bullock, the Psalms

stand as a monumental witness to the timeless and universal nature of man. His heart is turned so easily to sin. Hatred, greed, and disobedience are part of his infamous baggage. Without God, his Creator, he is orphaned in the world. But despite who man is, God sees him as His special creation (Psalm 8) and seeks to redeem him. The essential nature of man is counterbalanced, indeed countermanded, by the essential nature of God... It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in the arena of faith the book of Psalms has been a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night for Israel and the church” (*An Introduction to Old Testament Poetic Books*, p. 111).

The Psalms are 150 attempts to sing our way back into the Dance of the Trinity, and tune our lives to The Father’s Song. They capture the full library of human experience and emotion.

Perhaps the closest contemporary style of music closest to the raw, gutsy, authenticity

of the Psalmist are today's Hip-Hop rap artists. Hip-Hop music is often characterized as a poetic expression of social protest and lyrical accounts of one people's individual and corporate societal struggles.

In other words, Rap music has been categorized as "a cultural evolution of the Black oral tradition and contemporary resistance rhetoric."

In the same way, the Psalms provide a rich tapestry of individual and corporate religious protests, cries for justice, deliverance, safety and rescue. Israel recounts her own history of oppression and its struggle for liberation.

The Psalms should be packaged with *Parental Warning* labels. The lyrics are uncensored and filled with explicit, violent images one moment, and sacred, reverent praise choruses the next. One should not examine and study the Psalms primarily with their mind, as much as they should let them wash over their

soul like a beautiful sunset, an electrifying concert or breathtaking painting. Good music does not explain and define, it expresses and emotes.

How does this ancient 150-song playlist relate to the one, unified, gradually unfolding Father's Song we've been tracing throughout the entire story of the Bible? I suggest that these 150 songs provide us with a library of imperfect, individual attempts to echo the foundational groove and harmonious rhythms of The Father's Song.

In the Psalms we glimpse snippets of the beauty and majesty of God, are faced with the naked realities of the brokenness and injustice of the world, witness the universal longing for meaning, the depravity of human nature and come face to face with the Holy and trustworthy character of the Living God.

The psalmist invites us to make these songs our own, and bring us into the courts of the the Living God so we might hear more

clearly the beautiful melody of the Song above all songs of which all our songs are only faint echoes.

This is a priceless collection, a prized treasure of the people of God—both past and present. Again, in the words of Bullock: “To read and pray the Psalms is to join the voices of numberless people who too have read and prayed them, have felt their joy, anguish, and indignation.”

So, let us not only read and pray the psalms; but let our very lives be swept up into their God-centered melodies and bring us more in step with The Father’s Song.



10

ELEVATOR MUSIC (JUDGES)

If you want a powerful image of what it looks like to living in tune with The Father's Song and in perfect step with the Spirit, just watch an episode of *Dancing With the Stars*. The dancers must be in perfect step with one another; but even more importantly they must be intimately familiar with the music. Every note, beat and break must be exhaustively rehearsed and every

stride and strut perfectly choreographed and timed to precision.

One thing is for sure: These dancers are completely absorbed in and focused intently on the music that is moving them so purposefully and elegantly across the dance floor.

Now, contrast this image with another one. Step into your local bookstore, Dentist office, hotel lobby or elevator and you will likely hear soft, inconspicuous background music setting the mood. Background music serves a completely different role than the music on *Dancing With the Stars*.

Rather than being swept up, taken over and moved to and fro by elevator music, it's intended purpose is merely to provide a splash of ambience and atmosphere. It holds little influence or power, it simply adds a touch of sound to fill the silence.

By the time we reach David's son and successor to Israel's throne, Solomon, the Father's Song seems to be serving more and

more as background, elevator music in these bumpy narratives.

Solomon, in particular, is a case in point. He is clearly endowed by God with great capacity for wisdom, composing some 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. He is credited for writing the Song of Songs, the Book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. “People from every nation came to consult him and to hear the wisdom God had given him” (1 Kings 10:24).

Yet, if we look at the lifestyle he led and personal choices he made, it seems fair to conclude that Solomon wasn’t focused intently on nor swept up in the rhythms of The Father’s Song. His mixed legacy leads one to believe rather that he merely let The Father’s Song provide some pleasant, religious and inspirational background music in his life.

Solomon’s life, much like David, was a tale of conflicting tunes. He was a God-fearing man on the one hand, leading the building of the Holy Temple. “God gave Solomon wisdom

and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore” (1 Kings 4:29).

He spoke 3,000 proverbs and his songs numbered 1,005. He was blessed extravagantly by God with abundant wealth and political success. First Kings states that he owned 12,000 horses with horsemen and 1,400 chariots.

On the other hand, his downfall came in his old age. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. He had taken many foreign wives, whom he allowed to worship other gods. He even built shrines for the sacrifices of his foreign wives. Within Solomon’s kingdom, he placed heavy taxation on the people, who became bitter.

I imagine King Solomon living a lavish and luxurious life, busy writing wisdom books and philosophical treatises, leading building campaigns and conducting international business with foreign neighbors. Meanwhile the

Father's Song faded ever more into the background of his busy life.

“As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been” (1 Kings 11:4).

His heart was captured by foreign songs and his life grew more and more out of sync with The Father's Song. He was like a rockstar whose life had become so absorbed with the trappings of fame and fortune, that he forgot all about the music that had gotten him there in the first place.

Whenever I write, I like to turn some classical music on quietly in the background of my study to help set the mood. It does not inform my thoughts, influence my emotions or move my body. It merely provides an aura of sophistication and fills the empty silence.

Does the Father's Song guide and direct the steps and inform the main movements and decisions of our lives? Or is it just background elevator music adding a touch of spirituality and a religious flavor to an otherwise self-directed life?

The words of Jesus echo in the background of that questions: "Let all who have ears to hear, listen."



11

COUNTRY BREAKUP SONGS (PROPHETS)

There is the right song for every situation. There is music for every mood. And everyone's musical library should include a good collection of quality break-up songs.

Country music provides plenty of options for this category. My go-to-guy for

heart-wrenching, gut-punching break-up songs is without question Chris Isaak.

I bought Chris Isaak's *Forever Blue* album back in '95 when I was 16-years old. Every single track is a tale of romantic woe, heartache and a hopeless outlook on love. Isaak's matchless Elvis-Orbison-like voice and soothing acoustic guitar makes this otherwise painfully depressing collection of songs enjoyable.

My best friend, Peter, is still upset a decade and a half later that I made him listen to the entire album start to finish in my car as part of his "healing" the night he broke up with his girlfriend. I thought it would provide some solace and sympathy reminding him he wasn't alone, and "misery loves company." He claims it was pure torture and only threw salt on his wounded heart. Here's a taste:

*The stars have all stopped shining,
the sun just won't break through.*

*Each days the same,
more clouds more rain.
You're left forever blue.
(Chris Isaak, Forever Blue)*

On second thought, maybe he was right!

Unfaithful lovers. Wounded hearts. Longing and regret. Fighting and forgiveness. Pain and sorrow. Long, lonely nights. All core elements of a good break-up song and all part of the universal human experience—going back thousands of years by the way.

As we continue our melodious trek through the Bible, tracing the theme of The Father's Song, we come now to the books of the prophets of Israel.

The prophetic books of the Bible are filled with emotional outpouring. Every mood is captured. Still I believe we are not too far off base to call the prophetic books the “country break-up songs” of the Hebrew tradition. Over and over God is portrayed as the Wounded

Lover chasing after his unfaithful bride, Israel, who keeps running after other lovers.

Philip Yancey's well-known description captures this image well:

“The powerful image of a jilted lover explains why, in his speeches to the prophets, God seems to “change his mind” every few seconds. He is preparing to obliterate Israel—wait, now he is weeping, holding out open arms—no, he is sternly pronouncing judgment again. Those shifting moods seem hopelessly irrational, except to anyone who has been jilted by a lover. The words of the prophets sound like the words of a lovers’ quarrel drifting through thin apartment walls” (Philip Yancey, *Disappointment With God*, p. 99).

Like a junior high girl delivering her friend's break-up note to the poor boy at his locker, so the prophets serve as the unlucky messenger

bringing tension-filled, heart-felt words back and forth between God to unfaithful Israel. Hearts are broken. Love is betrayed. Tempers flare and tears flow. Forgiveness and reconciliation hang in the balance. Israel's collection of break-up songs sound a lot like today's sad country songs except for the stereotypical rusty trucks, booze and dying dogs.

The prophet Hosea is a living parable of God's strained relationship with unfaithful Israel permeating the prophets. Hosea is told by God to marry Gomer, an unfaithful wife, and to continue to lavish his love on her despite her adulterous ways. (By the way, a gal named Gomer is not much better than a boy named Sue!)

Through Hosea God sings forth his broken-hearted song of betrayal, but with a hopeful twist in the tail:

She will chase after her lovers but not catch them;

she will look for them but not find them.

Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.'

*I will punish her for the days
she burned incense to the Baals;
she decked herself with rings and jewelry,
and went after her lovers,
but me she forgot,"
declares the LORD.*

*"Therefore I am now going to allure her;
I will lead her into the desert
and speak tenderly to her.*

*I will betroth you to me forever;
I will betroth you in righteousness and
justice,
in love and compassion.*

*I will betroth you in faithfulness,
and you will acknowledge the LORD."
(Hosea 2)*

Yes, the Father's Song is not without its southern twang and somber notes. Like Chris Isaak after a devastating break-up, Patsy Cline on lonely walk after midnight, or Alanis Morissette after a heated argument, the prophets refuse to sugarcoat the messy, complicated nature of the relationship between God and wayward human beings.

The prophets pour forth raw, gut-level honesty to the incriminating truth that we are the one's who are in the wrong, we are the one's who "started it", we are the ones who are guilty of unfaithfulness, and we are the one's running out the door rather than facing our Lover and working out the problem.

Yet, contrary to the message of Chris Isaak, the prophetic blues do not leave the listener without reason for hope. In the ever-changing, still-unfolding song of God there is no reason anyone should remain *forever* blue. Brighter days lie ahead.

As we leave the Old Testament and move into the New, we shall see that the Father's Song, while filled with many ups and downs, has an hope-filled upward trajectory that the attentive ear will anticipate.

The Father's Song is a love song at its core, and as we shall soon see it ends not with a messy break-up but with a joyous wedding banquet and unending song of celebration.

But we must not get too far ahead of ourselves.



12

MORE THAN SHEET MUSIC (JESUS)

As the OT comes to a close, God's plan to bring a tone-deaf and clumsy footed people back into the harmonious rhythms of The Father's Song seems a giant failure.

If only these notes on a page could become music in one's ear. If only someone could learn to play each note perfectly, perhaps the world would be irresistibly drawn to the

music and join in the chorus. If only someone could breathe life into the sheet music and make it dance like those dry bones in Ezekiel's vision. If only the Word, God's very wisdom and power could become flesh and dwell among us.

If only. If only.

Enter Jesus!

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This shocking statement brings us to the climactic point of “The Father's Song” survey of the Bible.

Jesus came to live among us as The Father's Song incarnate. Jesus came as the fulfillment of the Law—God's written will perfectly accomplished in his life. Jesus did what Israel had failed to do so many times: he lived his entire life in perfect step with his Father.

He danced with the Spirit. He sang harmonies with the Father. His life sang an irresistible song and all who came within earshot turned to listen and often joined his Kingdom dance.

Jesus strongly castigated the Scribes and Pharisees because they obsessed over the written details of the Law but didn't seem to live it out in a way that brought life to others. In other words, they studied the sheet music day and night but never got around to pulling their instruments out and making any music with it. Any music they might have made sounded nothing like the Father's Song.

Paul knows that Law must become more than letters (or, musical notes) on a page: “[God] has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor 3: 6).

And so Jesus came not to trash God's Holy Sheet Music but to perform it perfectly for

all to hear and experience. In his words, “Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt 5:17). Yes, to “fill full” the earth with divine harmonies.

So Jesus danced the Kingdom Dance wherever he went. Jesus sang The Father’s Song with every act of lovingkindness, every healing he performed, every demon he cast out, every sermon he preached, every prayer he prayed. People took notice. The crowds loved what they saw and heard and so many followed.

But don’t take my word for it. I wasn’t there. But John had a front row seat as the Son of God incarnate performed his 4 year rendition of the Father’s Song in the presence of he and his eleven bandmates:

“From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it

happen! And now we're telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!" (1 John 1:4)

When the Word became flesh, the Father's Song was heard around the world. And still today, whenever someone "with ears to hear" gets just a taste of "infinite Life of God" available to us in Christ, we cannot help but tell others about it and invite them into the Dance. We long to share every new single off the Triune God's irresistible new soundtrack!

Let's give Jesus thanks for bringing the Father's Song to life and inviting us to join in the Dance! Now may we be moved to share this joyful dance with others!



13

DANCING TOGETHER (CHURCH)

Jesus lived his entire life completely swept up in the rhythms of the Father's Song. Remember that in the very beginning, before the creation of the world, all that existed was the eternal dance of the Trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit enjoying pure, self-giving, mutual joy and love between their three eternally distinct persons.

This is a mystery for sure. But when "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling

among us” (John 1:14) we were given a glimpse of what it looks like when a human being lives in perfect oneness with the Triune Godhead. This is the One who said: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does” (John 5:19). See that? The Son follows the Father across the dance floor in perfect step.

The Bible defines “sin” using an old archery term (Geek *harmartia*) which means to “miss the target.” Borrowing from the world of music, sin is then “singing out of key” or “playing out of tune” or “being out of step with your divine partner.” Every single word and deed of Jesus’ life was right on target, with perfect pitch and totally in step with the Father.

Before Jesus left this earth to return to the Father he prayed a most majestic prayer on

behalf of his followers. His famous prayer is recorded in John 17:

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17: 20-23).

No image better captures the essence of Jesus’ prayer for his followers than a dance. Jesus prays for unity and oneness. “I in them and you in me”, “that they may be one as we are one,” “just as you are in me and I am in you,” and so on.

The complete unity with the Father and Spirit that the obedient Son of God demonstrated is now our model for living our lives with one another. We are to dance in perfect unity, in perfect stride with the Father and to the God-beat of the Kingdom dance Jesus' taught us. As we achieve this God-empowered, Spirit-led unity with one another and God the onlooking world will believe and join in the Dance.

A point that must be underscored here is that the Christian life is a *communal* life. The Christian experience is a shared experience. The Father's Song can only be sang in a choir of unified voices and the Kingdom dance can only be danced with other partners.

The Bible leaves no trace of a private faith or lone-ranger Christian life. Just as one person cannot sing a duet, so also a lone Christian cannot perform the Father's Song by him or herself. The Christian life is involves learning to practice *in community* all of the 59

different “one anothers” of scripture. Popular Christian teacher Andy Stanley claims, “The primary activity of the church was one-anothering one another.”

The Apostle Paul captures this goal of unified interdependency in his image of the human body:

By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which he has the final say in everything...The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't” (1 Cor 12 The Message).

This profound truth—that central to our public witness for reaching others with the gospel of salvation and restoration is the unity we share—

amplifies the deep sadness we should feel about all of the infighting and division present within God's universal Church. There is nothing more grievous among Christians than division among brothers and sisters within the Body.

That's why there is also nothing more admirable and Christlike than when people seek forgiveness and reconciliation with one another. This, too, displays the beauty of The Father's Song to the onlooking world. The sounds of healing, reconciliation, forgiveness and love toward those who have wronged us is rare in our raucous world, and there is no sweeter note or a more compelling lyric in all the universe than "I forgive you."

So, we see here in Jesus' prayer and the community-centered writings of Paul and the other New Testament Letters that The Father's Song is a corporate experience aimed at inviting more and more participants into the dance of divine grace, learning how to live together in redemptive community.

James' epistle helps believers overcome petty quarrels and sharp tongues in order to live more wisely and compassionately with fellow believers.

Peter's epistles encourage believers to keep singing songs of hope in times of darkness, pain, persecution and suffering.

Each of these faithful writers are chiefly concerned with the sound of the whole band, making ample allowances for individual members who each in their turn miss a note now and again.

But with God's endless patience and ever flowing river of grace, these New Testament writers are slowly helping the church become a choir capable of singing a "stunning anthem" to God. In Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of Paul:

"May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well

*as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we'll be a choir—not our voices only, but **our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master Jesus**” (Romans 15:3 my emphasis)!*

That stunning anthem is sung forth as we intentionally join others on the dance floor and learn to sing and dance together the 59 songs of “one-anothering”. Put these in your jukebox! Add these to your playlist!

The 59 One Anothers of the NT

1. “...Be at peace with each other.” (Mark 9:50)
2. “...Wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:14)
3. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34)
4. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34)
5. “...Love one another...” (John 13:35)
6. “...Love one another...” (John 15:12)
7. “...Love one another” (John 15:17)

8. “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...” (Romans 12:10)
9. “...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
10. “Live in harmony with one another...” (Romans 12:16)
11. “...Love one another...” (Romans 13:8)
12. “...Stop passing judgment on one another.” (Romans 14:13)
13. “Accept one another, as Christ accepted you” (Rom 15:7)
14. “...Instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)
15. “Greet one another with a holy kiss...” (Romans 16:16)
16. “When you come together to eat, wait for each other.” (I Cor. 11:33)
17. “...Have equal concern for each other.” (I Corinthians 12:25)
18. “...Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (I Corinthians 16:20)
19. “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (II Corinthians 13:12)
20. “...Serve one another in love.” (Gal 5:13)

21. “If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other.” (Galatians 5:15)
22. “Let’s not be conceited, provoking & envying each other.” (Galatians 5:26)
23. “Carry each other’s burdens...” (Gal 6:2)
24. “...Be patient, bearing with one another in love.” (Eph. 4:2)
25. “Be kind and compassionate to one another...” (Ephesians 4:32)
26. “...Forgiving each other...” (Ephesians 4:32)
27. “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” (Ephesians 5:19)
28. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Eph. 5:21)
29. “In humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Phil 2:3)
30. “Do not lie to each other...” (Colossians 3:9)
31. “Bear with each other...” (Colossians 3:13)
32. “Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.” (Colossians 3:13)
33. “Teach...[one another]” (Colossians 3:16)
34. “...Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)

35. "Make your love increase & overflow for each other." (I Thes 3:12)
36. "...Love each other." (I Thessalonians 4:9)
37. "...Encourage each other..." (I Thes 4:18)
38. "...Encourage each other..." I Thes 5:11)
39. "...Build each other up..." (I Thes 5:11)
40. "Encourage one another daily..." Heb 3:13)
41. "Spur one another on toward love & good deeds." (Heb 10:24)
42. "...Encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)
43. "...Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
44. "Don't grumble against each other..." (James 5:9)
45. "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16)
46. "...Pray for each other." (James 5:16)
47. "...Love one another deeply, from the heart." (I Peter 3:8)
48. "...Live in harmony with one another..." (I Peter 3:8)
49. "...Love each other deeply..." (I Peter 4:8)
50. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Pet 4:9)

51. “Each should use the gift he’s received to serve others” (I Pet 4:10)
52. “...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another...”(I Peter 5:5)
53. “Greet one another with a kiss of love.” (I Peter 5:14)
54. “...Love one another.” (I John 3:11)
55. “...Love one another.” (I John 3:23)
56. “...Love one another.” (I John 4:7)
57. “...Love one another.” (I John 4:11)
58. “...Love one another.” (I John 4:12)
59. “...Love one another.” (II John 5)



14

WEDDING DANCE (REVELATION)

We end where we began —The Dance.

The Book of Genesis opened up with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit enraptured in the Eternal rhythms of perfect love. The interpenetrating divine love radiating amongst the three persons of the Trinity —*perichoresis* —was so good it just had to be shared. God apparently wanted a barn dance more than a private romance.

“Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us...” So God created human beings in his own image...male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said,“Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:26-28).

Perhaps the Dance is just one more reason God created a pair—a man and woman—rather than just a man. For it takes two to tango, and like your friend trying to set you up at a dance, God desires to find us a “suitable partner” too.

Also don't miss the fact that the first assignment given to the two love birds is to follow the example of the Trinity and multiply the number of dancers on the floor: “Be fruitful and *multiply*.” Like a wedding DJ, he wants to get as many people dancing as possible.

And so we've followed the Father's Song through the grand sweep of biblical history, seeing the tragic effects of stubborn tone deaf people trying to sing their own songs and move to their own groove. The result is our

mosh pit world of sin—bodies flailing this way and that, lives crashing up against other lives, and spirits crushed on the ground.

We've seen the Father's attempts to call out of the noise a people for himself. Abraham heard the song first. Moses wrote the lyrics down on stone tablets, and tried in vain for forty years to get his band to perform it. The psalms give us 150 songs to help lead us onto the divine dance floor. The prophets, like country songs, warn us of the heartache that results when we walk out on the Dance like a man walking out on his wife and kids.

Finally, in the fullness of time, Jesus slip-slides onto the scene, and at last put the Father's Song into action, not just humming it quietly to himself in a remote field but living it *out loud* in public, showing us all the moves. Jesus was "taking it to the streets" as the song goes. His invitation to learn the Kingdom Dance echoed forth to "all who had ears to hear" (Matt 11:15). Sadly, many did not.

Remember your first awkward school dance? Remember sitting shyly in the dark corner on a metal folding chair with a plastic cup of punch in your hand, eyes avoiding all potential invitations? Then it happened. Time stood still as someone approached you, extended their hand and said, “Wanna dance?”

A similar scene was played out by the sea of Galilee when Jesus extended his hand toward Peter, Matthew, John, James, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and others—each with the invitation to join him in learning the Kingdom Dance:

“Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life...[Dance] with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace...Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matt 11:28-30 my adapted version of The Message).

That same invitation to join Jesus in a life of learning his rhythms has been the drumbeat and theme song of the church ever since Jesus left this earth. “Go, therefore, and make disciples, or *kingdom dancers*, of all nations” were his last words and the urgent task bestowed upon his followers, the church.

Whether or not we use this language or metaphor, the invitation to The Dance has been the plea of millions of preachers and teachers, missionaries and evangelists, longing to bring as many people to that Eternal Dance when this earthly concert plays its final encore and the curtains come down.

Now, as we begin to wrap up this sweet sounding survey of the biblical story, we come to that climactic book that itself has the dramatic sound of an emotionally riveting rock opera. We call it Revelation.

But what exactly is being revealed? Well, at great risk of oversimplifying, I suggest the entire book, or rock opera, with all its

various movements, its joy and pathos, its minor notes and jubilant choruses, leads eventually to the climactic moment of a Bride coming down out of Heaven like a princess descending a grand staircase to meet her prince. John describes the scene:

“And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev. 21:2).

“Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:9).

Yes, after all the bowls of wrath, the seven trumpets, the plagues, manifold warnings of judgment, the lake of sulfur, and all the rest, the book eventually leads us back to a metal folding chair in a dark corner of a middle school gymnasium where we now receive the ultimate invitation to dance: Wanna dance?

The holy city, the new Jerusalem, the beautifully dressed bride is the collective family of all the redeemed who have RSVP'd "yes" to the wedding supper of the Lamb. The entire goal of history is being consummated in this scene, as the Eternal Love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit now pulls his people irresistibly into the arms of Agape. God and his people are together on the dance floor at last, free from the sin that kept them apart for so long. The bride and the groom embrace.

“Look, God’s dwelling is now among his people! He will live [or dance!] with them, and they will be his people [or kingdom dance partners!]. God himself will be with them” (Rev. 21:3).

“God himself will be *with them*.” Those two words sum up the goal of Father’s Song and the essence of Kingdom Dance. At the wedding supper of the Lamb Jesus’ prayer for the church is at last fulfilled:

“I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me” (John 17:21).

On that Day, all the other competing songs and dissonant chords that once kept us out of step and out of tune will be absorbed into, or silenced by, the one Father’s Song.

Its fitting that the closing scenes of the New Testament bring us to a wedding banquet with plenty of food and refreshments, a glorious venue, and, of course, “out of this world” musical entertainment. Heaven spared no expense to bring to the celebration Twenty-four musicians with a special song request to be sung during the supper:

“Each had a harp...And they sang a new song:

Worthy! Take the scroll, open its seals.

*Slain! Paying in blood, you bought men and women,
Bought them back from all over the earth,
Bought them back for God” (Revelation 5).*

After dinner the Dance of Dances begins, as the angel choir strikes up the Father’s Song:

*I looked again. I heard a company of
Angels around the Throne, the Animals, and
the Elders—ten thousand times ten
thousand their number, thousand after
thousand after thousand in full song:
The slain Lamb is worthy!
Take the power, the wealth, the wisdom, the
strength!
Take the honor, the glory, the
blessing” (Revelation 5).*

Angels singing in unison is nothing extraordinary. They have been singing the Father’s Song since the dawn of time. But then

a pregnant hush falls over the heavenly banquet hall, and angels hold their breath in anticipation for the moment they have been longing for aeons and aeons. The rest of God's creation, now rescued and redeemed, is about to join in the Song and Dance at last!

*“Then I heard every creature in Heaven and earth, in underworld and sea, join in, all voices in all places, singing:
To the One on the Throne! To the Lamb!
The blessing, the honor, the glory, the strength, For age after age after age” (Revelation 5:13-14).*

Perhaps some are standing on tables, swaying back and forth with arms on one another's shoulders. Its all smiles and laughter and singing in Heaven's banquet hall. Finish your dessert and push back the tables. Let the dance begin!

But two words are perhaps necessary as we bring our song to an end. First, a word of reassurance to those who may feel the idea of an eternal wedding dance or never ending sing along more in line with your vision of Hell. I, personally, would rather paint a fence or pull weeds all day than attend a wedding dance. Likewise, watching cat videos on YouTube all day sounds more interesting than a never ending church service with harps and choirs.

Let it be very clear that the images of the Father's Song and the Kingdom Dance are only metaphors for a much greater reality. The New Heaven's and New Earth described in Revelation, and the New Jerusalem radiant like a bride are also pointers to a reality we can all grow faint with excitement as we begin to contemplate it.

The Song and the Dance all point toward an experience of *ultimate shalom*—wholeness, peace, oneness, tranquility, and fullness of life in the absence of conflict—with

God, others and ourselves. It's the "life that is truly life" that Jesus came to give us, and the very thing the Thief has been working overtime to "seek, kill and destroy" (John 10:10). You were made for it, and it was made for you.

Finally, a word of challenge to all who have said "yes" to the wedding invitation and are already staking out a table in the heavenly banquet hall. Jesus made it very clear in his parable of the wedding banquet that He desires a full house when the celebration begins:

"God's kingdom," he said, "is like a king who threw a wedding banquet for his son. He sent out servants to call in all the invited guests. And they wouldn't come! "He sent out another round of servants, instructing them to tell the guests, 'Look, everything is on the table, the prime rib is ready for carving. Come to the feast!' "They only shrugged their shoulders and went off, one to weed his garden, another to

work in his shop....“Then he told his servants, ‘We have a wedding banquet all prepared but no guests. The ones I invited weren’t up to it. Go out into the busiest intersections in town and invite anyone you find to the banquet.’ The servants went out on the streets and rounded up everyone they laid eyes on, good and bad, regardless. And so the banquet was on—every place filled” (Matthew 22:1-10 Message).

All of us who know the Father’s Song and are learning the Kingdom Dance, are called to be like the servants in this parable inviting others to the Dance: “Look, everything is on the table, the prime rib is ready for carving. Come to the feast!”

We are to invite not only our family and friends, but also awkward people sitting on metal folding chairs in dark corners with eyes averted and partly hoping we just pass them by silently (though secretly hoping for an

invitation, if they can just muster the courage to accept). Let's never forget that there was a first dance for each of us now enjoying the Kingdom Dance. There was that first moment when our ears first heard the Father's Song cutting through all the other noise—and a warmth filled our soul and hope embraced us.

Do you remember your first Dance with Jesus? Do you remember who God sent over to your table , extending their hand and inviting you off your seat and onto the dance floor? A youth pastor? A friend? A parent? A mentor?

Do you remember who taught you the first lyrics of the Father's Song (maybe "Jesus Loves Me" or "This Little Light of Mine")? Do you remember who showed you your first steps to the Kingdom Dance (maybe praying the Lord's prayer, collecting coins for the food shelf, or helping someone in need)? A Sunday school teacher? A grandparent? A godparent?

Eternity beckons. The wedding banquet is already being prepared. The invitations are going out. The Father's Song echoes out of the Heavenly Hall as we speak, reaching down to Earth to "all those with ears to hear." God is forming his band, he's training up his symphony, he's auditioning parts for the Big Dance.

He's sending us out as four season carolers into a noisy world filled with competing choruses with a song of redemption on our lips and the unforced rhythms of grace in our souls. To all who open the door of their hearts we bring an invitation to join in the Father's Song.

*"O sing to the LORD a new song,
for He has done wonderful things!"*

Psalm 98:1

POSTLUDE

The Father's Song

by Matt Redman

*I have heard so many songs
Listened to a thousand tongues
But there is one
That sounds above them all
The Fathers song
The Fathers love
You sung it over me and for eternity
Its written on my heart
Heavens perfect melody
The Creators symphony
You are singing over me
The Fathers song
Heavens perfect mystery
The king of love has sent for me
And now you're singing over me
The Fathers song*

