

## The Bible in Music: New Testament

1. **I Know that My Redeemer Liveth.** From the Baroque oratorio *Messiah*, written by German composer George Frederick Handel (1685-1759) in 1741. This aria combines Job 19:25-26 with I Corinthians 15:20. This performance is with original instruments. (*Handel: Messiah*. Ama Deus Ensemble, directed by Valentin Radu. Vox CD VOX2-7502, 1994.)

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

2. **Sister Mary Had-a But One Child.** (Matthew 2) Traditional spiritual in a setting by African-American composer Roland Hayes (1887-1976). (*My Lord What a Mornin'*. Charles Holland, tenor and Dennis Russell Davies, piano. Musical Heritage Society CD MHS 512250K, 1988.)

*Sister Mary had but one child, born in Bethlehem,*

*And every time the baby cried she'd rock him in that weary land.*

Oh three wise men to Jerusalem came; they traveled very far.

They said "Where is he born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star?"

King Herod's heart was troubled; he marveled but his face was grim.

He said "Tell me where the child may be found? I'll go and worship him."

*Sister Mary had but one child. . .*

An angel appeared to Joseph and gave him this command:

"Arise ye, take your wife and child, go flee into Egypt land

for yonder comes old Herod, a wicked man and bold,

he's slaying all the children from six to eight days old.

*Sister Mary had but one child. . .*

3. **Star in the East.** (Luke 2) Shape-note hymn from *The Christian Harmony* (1866), published by South Carolina singing master William Walker (1809-1875). (*The American Vocalist: Spirituals and Folk Hymns, 1850-70*. Boston Camerata, directed by Joel Cohen. Erato CD 2292-45818-2, 1992)

Hail! the blest morn, when the Great mediator,

Down from the regions of glory descends;

Shepherds, go worship the Babe in the manger,

Lo! for his guard the bright angels attend.

*Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,*

*Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid.*

*Star in the East the horizon adorning,*

*Guide where our infant redeemer is laid.*

Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining,

Low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;

Angels adore him in slumbers reclining,

Maker, and Monarch, and Savior of all.

*Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,*

Say, shall we yield him in costly devotion,

Odors of Edom, and offerings divine,

Gems from the mountain, and pearls from the ocean,

Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine?

*Brightest and best. . .*

4. **L'Enfance du Christ (The Childhood of Christ).** Romantic oratorio written in 1854 by French composer Hector Berlioz (1803-1869). This excerpt, loosely based on Matthew 2, reveals King Herod asking his soothsayers for advice. (*Berlioz: L'Enfance du Christ*. Monteverdi Choir, Opera Orchestra of Lyon, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner. Erato CD 2292-45275-2, 1988.)

*Soothsayers:* The wise men of Judea, O king, acknowledge you to be a learned and noble ruler.  
They are devoted and loyal. Speak: what do you require of them?

*Herod:* That they enlighten me. Is there any remedy for the gnawing anxiety that has long beset me?

*Soothsayers:* What anxiety?

*Herod:* Every night I have the same terrifying dream.  
Each time a voice solemnly and slowly repeats these words:  
"Your years of happiness are almost at an end!  
A child has just been born who will abolish your throne and your power. . ."  
Can you tell me whether the terror that is crushing me is justified,  
And how this dreadful danger can be averted?

*Soothsayers:* The spirits will know the answer, and if we consult them they will soon reply.  
[After performing various pagan rituals, they continue:]  
The voice is right, your majesty.  
"A child has just been born who will abolish your throne and your power."  
But no one knows his name or his race.

*Herod:* What can I do?

*Soothsayers:* Your downfall will come unless the powers of darkness are placated,  
And you ward off fate by ordering the deaths of all new-born babies.

*Herod:* Very well then, let them be put to the sword! I have no hesitation about it.  
In Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem, let my blows strike at every newborn child!  
Despite the screams and tears of all the desperate mothers, rivers of blood must be shed.  
I will be deaf to their sufferings; neither beauty, grace, nor age  
Can weaken my resolve; I must put an end to my fears.

*Soothsayers:* Yes! Yes, let them be put to the sword! Do not hesitate.  
In Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem, let your blows strike at every newborn child!  
Be ever deaf to their sufferings, and let nothing weaken your resolve!  
And as for you, O spirits, increase his zeal for destruction by redoubling his fears!

5. **The Flight into Egypt.** Cantata written in 1990 by American composer John Harbison (b. 1938) based on Matthew 2:13-23. (*The Flight Into Egypt and Other Works by John Harbison*. Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Andre Previn. New World Records CD 80395-2, 1990.)

Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

6. **Christian Zeal and Activity:** This unusual work was composed in 1973 by American John Adams (b. 1947). The performers are encouraged to add appropriate "found sounds;" in this case a 1976 composition entitled "Sermon," which manipulates a pre-recorded text about the healing of the man with the withered hand in Mark 3:1-6. (*John Adams: The Chairman Dances*. San Francisco Symphony, conducted by Edo de Waart. Elektra Nonesuch CD 979144-2, 1987.)

Jesus was here and this place was packed, with people standing outside, and Jesus walks in. Jesus always moved about with Divine appointment. And he had an appointment with someone that had a withered hand and he was to make him whole. Now what's wrong with a withered hand? Why would Jesus have been drawn to a withered hand of a man that was in the synagogue? Well, a withered hand can't hold on to anything. Now I believe Jesus Christ not only healed this man in the synagogue that had the withered hand, but I believe this very same story has a message for you and me, even down here in this year in which we live. And I believe that same Jesus is present through the power of the Holy Spirit right here in this room, right now. I believe that. And he wants to meet every need, healing all that are oppressed of the Devil.

7. **Tu es Petrus (You are Peter).** Late Renaissance motet composed in 1607 by English Catholic composer William Byrd (1543-1623) on Matthew 16:18. (*Norton Anthology of Western Music*, v. 1/3. King's College Choir, conducted by David Willcocks. New York: Norton, 1988.)

Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram,  
aedificabo Ecclesiam meam. Alleluia.

You are Peter, and on this rock  
will I build my church. Alleluia.

8. **Stond wel, moder under roode.** Anonymous 13th-c. English version of a dramatic Easter sequence recreating a conversation between Jesus on the cross and his mother. (*The Lily and the Lamb*. Anonymous 4. Harmonia mundi CD 907125, 1995.)

*Jesus:* Stond wel, moder under roode,  
bihold thi child with glade moode;  
blithe moder miztu be.

*Mary:* Sun, hu mai i blithe stonde?  
I see thi feet, i see thin honde  
nailed to the harde tree.

Stand well, mother, under the cross,  
behold your child with glad spirit;  
happy mother may you be.

Son, how can I stand happily?  
I see your feet, I see your hands  
nailed to the hard tree.

9. **Seven Words.** Instrumental setting of the seven last words of Christ on the cross, written in 1982 by Soviet composer Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931). This movement, the sixth, is based on the phrase "It is finished," from John 19:30. The work is scored for cello, bayan (a Russian push-button accordion) and strings. (*Gubaidulina: Seven Words*. Camerata Transsylvanica, directed by Gyorgy Selmeczi. Naxos CD 8.553557, 1995.)

10. **Saul, was verfolgst du mich (Saul, why do you persecute me?).** Sacred concerto composed around 1650 by German Baroque composer Heinrich Schutz (1585-1672). The text is from Acts 9:4-5, which describes Saul's encounter on the Damascus road. (*Norton Anthology of Western Music*, v. 1/6. Barmen-Gemarke Choir, directed by Helmut Kahlhofer. New York: Norton, 1988.)

Saul, Saul, Saul, was verfolgst du mich?  
Es wird der schwer werden  
wider den Stachel zu löken.

Saul, Saul, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?  
It will be hard for you  
to kick against the pricks.

11. **Cum essem parvulus (When I was a child).** Motet written in 1579 by Italianized Netherlandish composer Orlando di Lasso (1532-1594) on I Corinthians 13. (*Norton Anthology of Western Music*, v. 1/3. Kaufbeurer Martinsfinken, directed by Ludwig Hahn. New York: Norton, 1988.)

Cum essem parvulus,  
loquebar ut parvulus.  
sapiebam ut parvulus.  
cogitabam ut parvulus;  
quando autem factus sum vir,  
evacuavi quae erant parvuli.  
Videmus nunc per speculum  
in aenigmate; tunc autem  
facie ad faciem.  
Nunc cognosco ex parte,  
tunc autem cognoscam  
sicut et cognitus sum.  
Fides, Spes, Charitas; tria haec:  
major autem horum est Charitas.

When I was a child,  
I spoke as a child,  
I understood as a child,  
I thought as a child;  
But when I became a man,  
I put away childish things.  
Now we see through a glass  
darkly; but then  
face to face.  
Now I understand in part;  
Then I shall understand fully  
Just as I shall be understood.  
Faith, hope, love--these three:  
But the greatest of these is love.

12. **Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland (Now Come, Savior of the Gentiles).** Cantata composed by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) for the advent season of 1714. The text is by German Lutheran poet Erdmann Neumeister, who combined Biblical texts with devotional poetry. This excerpt begins with a recitative on Revelation 3:20, followed by a poetic response designed to encourage the same response among the churchgoing listeners. (*Norton Anthology of Western Music*, v. 1/6. Deutsche Bachsolisten, directed by Helmut Kahlhofer. New York: Norton, 1988.)

*Recitative (prose text):*

Siehe, ich stehe vor der Tür und klopfe an.	Behold, I stand at the door and knock;
So jemand meine Stimme hören wird	if any man hear my voice,
und die Tür auftun,	and open the door,
zu dem werde ich eingehen	I will come in to him
und das Abendmahl mit ihm halten	and will sup with him,
und er mit mir	and he with me.

*Aria (poetic text):*

Öffne dich, mein ganzes Herze,	Open up, my whole heart,
Jesus kömmt und ziehet ein.	Jesus comes and takes possession.
Bin ich gleich nur Staub und Erde,	Though I am only dust and earth
Will er mich doch nicht verschmähn,	Still He will not disdain
Seine Lust an mir zu sehn,	To show His delight
Dass ich seine Wohnung werde.	That I become His dwelling place.
O wie selig werd ich sein!	O how blessed will I be!

13. **Quartet for the End of Time.** Instrumental quartet written in 1941 by French composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992), while he was a Nazi prisoner of war in Stalag VIII-A at Görlitz. The first movement, *Liturgie de cristal*, is scored for clarinet, violin, cello and piano. The work is based on Revelation 10:6, the vision of the angel who proclaims that "time shall be no more." (*Olivier Messiaen: Quatour pour la fin du temps*. Vera Beths, violin; George Pieterse, clarinet; Anner Bijlsma, cello; Reinbert de Leeuw, piano. Philips CD 422 834-2, 1980.)