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possibility that what the angel and heavenly host were “saying” might very well have been sung.

Scripture contains a number of passages that are referred to by scholars as “songs” without being directly identified as such in context. Recognizing these songs requires “Scansion”, which is defined as the “analysis of verse to show its meter”. Since musical notation is a relatively modern development, ancient songs ought to be analyzed for lyrical structure which may not be immediately perceptible when reading from a translation rather than the original language.

“Mary’s Song” is a prominent example of biblical music that is not explicitly called music in the text. *“Mary said:*

*‘My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.
For He who is mighty has done great things for me,
And holy is His name.
And His mercy is on those who fear Him
From generation to generation.
He has shown strength with His arm;
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And exalted the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich He has sent away empty.
He has helped His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy,
As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed forever”* (Luke 1:46-55)

The so-called “Magnificat” contains parallelism in which the second half of a verse mirrors, expands upon, or contrasts with the first, including both synonymous parallelism, repeating a thought, and antithetical parallelism, contrasting ideas.

Specifically, Mary’s Song features a chiasm, which is inverted pattern, in this case: A-B-C-C-B-A:

- A – Exaltation of God as he remembers His covenant (46-48)
- B – God’s might and His mercy (49-50)
- C – God’s strength reversing the fortunes of the proud (51)

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- C – God’s strength reversing the fortunes of the humble (52)
- B – God’s might and His mercy (53)
- A – Exaltation of God as He remembers His covenant (54-55)

Mary’s Song is largely reflective of Hannah’s Song (1st Samuel 2:1-10), both in tone and in structure. Hannah was thankful and filled with praise because she who had been barren was blessed with a son whom she dedicated from childhood to the service of Jehovah and Mary was thankful and filled with praise because she who was still a virgin was being blessed with a Son whose whole life was dedicated to the service of Jehovah. Not only is the tone of Hannah’s Song a precursor to Mary’s, but the lyrical structure is practically identical, with nearly the same chiastic pattern used.

Jonah’s prayer from the fish (Jonah 2:2-9) is another song that is not explicitly called music, but its content necessarily implies that it is. It contains metaphorical language, in particular: *“the earth with its bars closed behind me forever”* (6). And a chiasm is manifest:

- A – Request for deliverance (2-3)
- B – Experience of sinking (4-5)
- X – Shifting perspective toward the temple (6-7)
- B – Experience of deliverance (7-8)
- A – Gratitude for rescue (9)

Most of all, Jonah’s prayer contains the qualities of a psalm, beginning with the words *“I cried out to Jehovah”* (Jonah 2:2), which is a frequent lyrical phrase among the psalms (Psalm 30:2; 138:3). It also includes two references to the prophet reorienting himself toward the temple (Jonah 2:4, 7), which is in keeping with many of the psalms (Psalm 138:2). *“All your waves and billows passed over me”* (Jonah 2:3) is nearly a verbatim quote from Psalm 42:7.

Given how frequently songs appear in Scripture without being labeled as such, the possibility that the angelic announcement of Christ’s birth was musical is not unlikely.

When His disciples failed to grasp His metaphor about *“the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees”*, Jesus became frustrated and even criticized their faith (Matthew 16:5-12). Some things are meant to be understood without having to be spelled out.

Although brevity may contribute to the difficulty of perceiving meter, there is a certain rhythm to what the angels told the shepherds. If it is not a song, it is very similar, and the songs of Scripture are still songs even when Scripture does not call them that.

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Men's & Ladies' Studies @ 6:20 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN
SETTINGS OF SILVER"**

PROVERBS 25:11

"A good man, though a slave, is free; but a wicked man, though a king, is a slave, for he serves, not one man alone, but what is worse, as many masters as he has vices."

– Augustine of Hippo

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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SCANSION

Bryan Matthew Dockens

Sincere disciples are always cautious not to presume upon the revealed word of God, being careful not add meaning to the inspired text which the Holy Spirit never intended, for it is written: *"Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar"* (Proverbs 30:6). Therefore, it is not pedantic when Christians inquire as to the accuracy of such hymns as Tell Me the Story of Jesus, including the lines: *"Tell how the angels in chorus sang as they welcomed his birth, 'Glory to God in the highest! Peace and good tidings to earth.'" Serious students of Scripture want to know if the angels really sang. This is a fair question, which, upon examination, increases confidence in regarding the angelic announcement to the shepherds as musical.*

The narrative is rather plain: *"Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'"* (Luke 2:13-14). The record does not present the angel nor the host of heaven as "singing", per se, but merely *"saying"*. Nevertheless, singing is not precluded from saying, for when the apostle taught singing as the mode of worshipful music in the New Testament, he wrote, *"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:19). Since *"speaking"* can include *"singing"*, it remains within the realm of – Continued on page 2 –

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