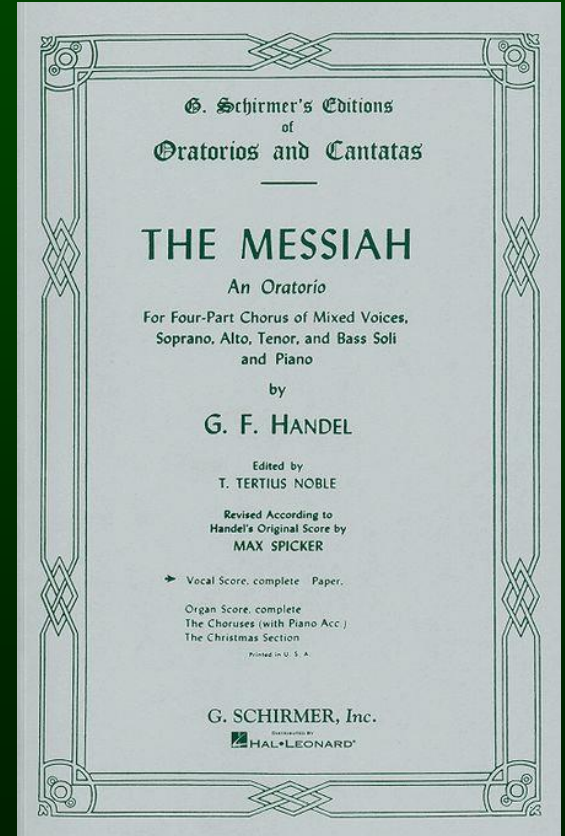


Handel's Messiah: Bringing Scripture to Life



Week 1 of 7

**John Kincaid
Autumn, 2018**

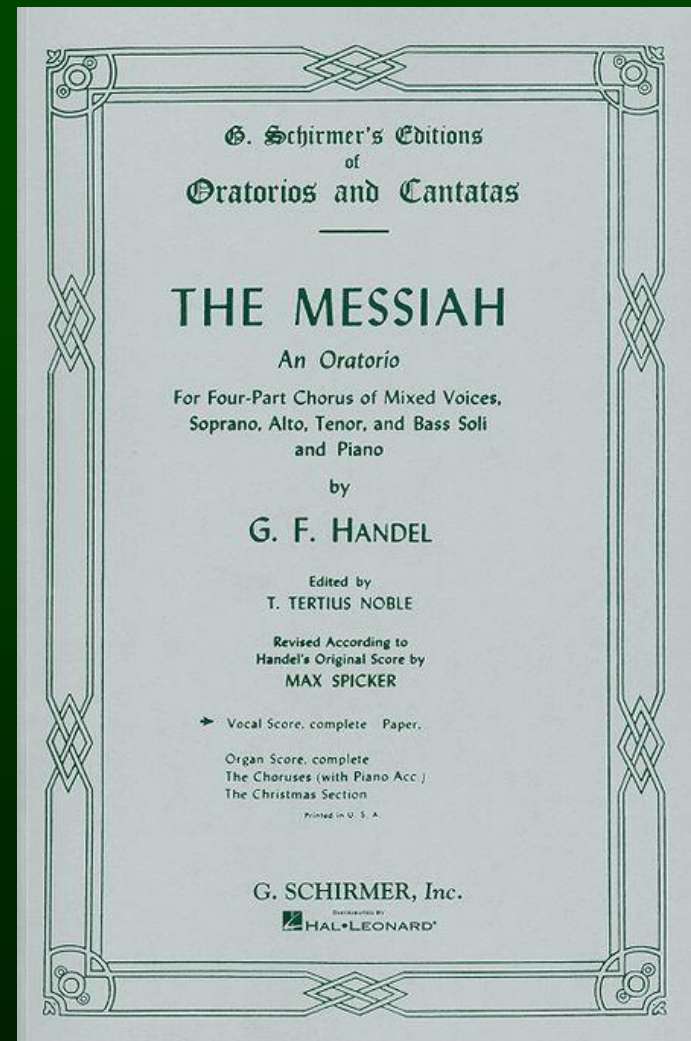


Handel's Thanksgiving

- **This music is Handel's expression of thanks to God**
- **Handel appreciated God's gift: His Son Jesus Christ**
- **Handel's thank-you note was 250 pages of music**
- **Handel wrote it in only 3 weeks!**
- **Then he shared it with the world**
- **Messiah was performed to benefit others**

Handel's Enduring Gift

- 2 great composers of church music: Bach & Handel
- Others come and go; their music endures
- Handel's Messiah unites generations of singers



Messiah Has 3 Parts

Part 1: Christmas

Prophecy & Christ's birth

Part 2: Easter

His Death & Resurrection

Part 3: Christ's Return

The Second Coming

Christ Carrying the Cross_The Resurrection
Gerard David, Belgium, 1510



The Recording

- Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus
- Directed by Sir Georg Solti
- Considered to be among the best performances



Music and Theology in Harmony

- **Notice how beautifully one text flows into another**
- **Diverse Scripture passages unite into one song**
- **How the message returns to its heart: Isaiah 40**
- **Handel carefully chose certain songs to be solos**
- **When to use male voices, parts or full chorus**
- **Handel's music harmonizes with theology**

The God of All Comfort – 2 Cor.1:3-4

- **Isaiah 40:1-5 was originally intended for Israel**
- **Various cultures have worshipped this same God**
- **God's Word is eternal truth, for every generation**
- **The Bible has fresh insight for new circumstances**
- **Handel realized the Bible's significance for *his* life**
- **We relate Isaiah's words to Christ's birth, but...**
- **700 years earlier, what was the original message?**

Israel Under David and Solomon

- **Israel flourished under David and his son Solomon**
- **David killed Goliath, a great victory for Israel**
- **It was not David's ability or courage – it was faith**
- **Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, Zec.4:6**
- **David trusted the Lord to deliver him**
- **After David and Solomon died, the nation split**

The Divided Kingdom

- Divided kingdom of Israel had 2 parts
- Northern part kept the name Israel
- Their king was not a son of David
- The southern part was called Judah
- Their king descended from David
- They kept Jerusalem as the capital



Assyrian Captivity

- The northern part Israel fell to the Assyrians
- The people were taken into captivity in 722 BC
- The people of Judah narrowly escaped
- They believed they were miraculously spared because their king and Temple were in Jerusalem
- They thought God would *never* allow these to fall: Messiah, son of David, would live in the Temple

Isaiah's Ministry

- **Isaiah tried to wake up the people of Judah**
- **They had become complacent and insincere**
- **Isaiah confronted them with their sin**
- **He prayed they would repent to avoid disaster**
- **But they would not listen.**

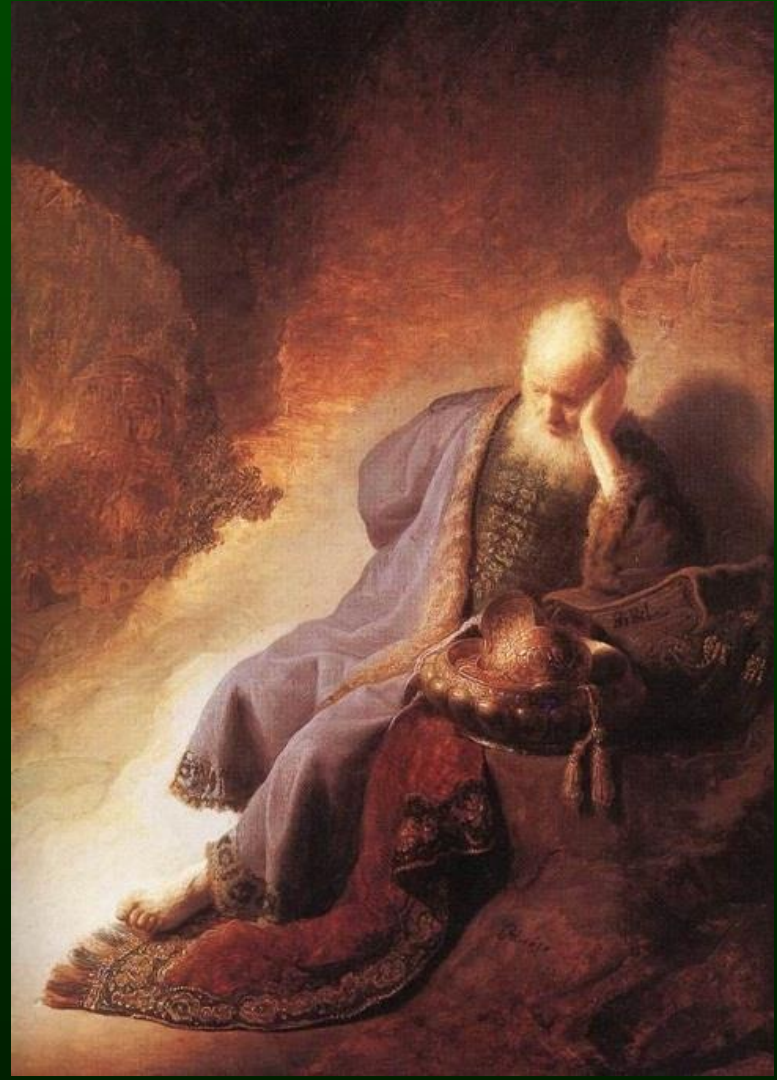
Babylonian Captivity

- 135 years passed after the northern kingdom fell
- 586 BC: a new super-power came from Babylon
- Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple were destroyed
- The people of Judah were taken into captivity

How Could This Happen?

- People of Judah were in shock
- How can the Temple be gone?
- They felt disillusion & despair
- And they fell silent about God

Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem
Jer.39:2, Rembrandt, Leiden, 1630



Where Was God in All This?

- **In hard times of trial / testing, the temptation is:
to think that God doesn't love you anymore,
or that God has abandoned you,
or that there is no God.**
- **That's just what Satan wants you to think**
- **Have you ever felt abandoned by God?**
- **If so, then you can relate to how they felt**

The Light Shines in the Darkness (John 1:5)

- Then out of the despair, we hear the voice of Isaiah
- Isa.40:1 - Comfort my people. Like a lullaby.
- Like a parent reassuring an injured child
- God said “It’s all right. I will bring you home.”
- The prophecy came over a century *before* the exile

The Journey Home

- Persia conquered Babylon, ending Judah's exile
- King Cyrus set free the Babylonian captives
- Centuries earlier, their ancestors left Egypt
- For Judah, it was like reliving the Exodus.
- But how would they get back home?
- Could their loved ones survive the difficult trip?

A Highway in the Wilderness

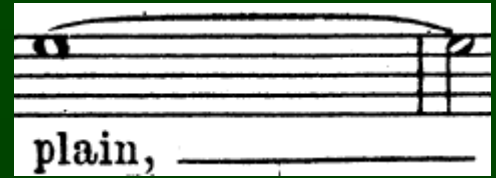
- Isaiah spoke of a highway in the wilderness
- It would be straight and level, without obstacles
- Moses wandered through the desert for 40 years
- But this journey would be easier than the Exodus
- When the exile began they felt abandoned by God
- But going home, they *knew* God was with them
- This road was also *God's* highway to Jerusalem

All Flesh Shall See It

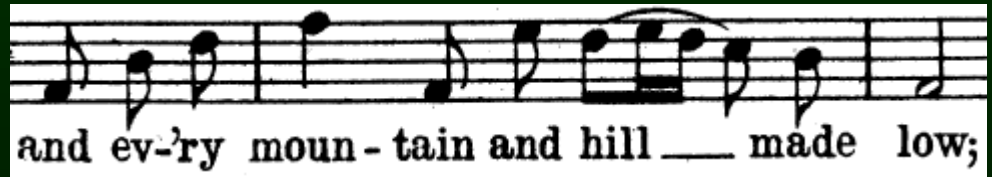
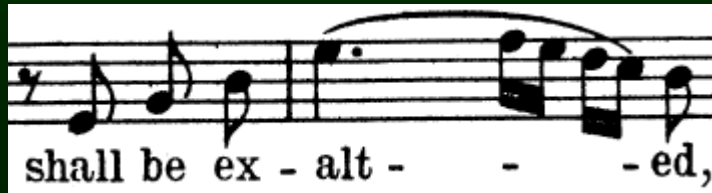
- **Their neighbors had slandered God's reputation:**
- **How could God allow His people to be exiled?**
- **This God had allowed His Temple to be destroyed**
- **His people had been taken as slaves to Babylon**
- **But now the people were restored to their land**
- **God used the exile to give Himself greater glory**
- **All people would see that God's Word is truth**



Musical Word Pictures



- Handel's music paints the same picture as the text
- In *Every Valley*, pitches climb on the word "exalted"
- The word "low" rolls down to the bottom of the hill.
- The music for the word "crooked" twists and turns
- The words "plain" and "straight" are long & smooth



Hallelujah Chorus, Part 1

- *And the Glory* = the Hallelujah Chorus of Part 1
- God preserved the words of Isaiah for us across 27 centuries and over 100 generations.
- Hear now the gift of music God created in Handel



Comfort Ye – Isaiah 40:1-3

**Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her
that her warfare is accomplished,
that her iniquity is pardoned.**

**The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**



Every Valley – Isaiah 40:4

Every valley
shall be exalted,
and every mountain
and hill made low:
the crooked
straight, and the
rough places plain.



Grand Canyon, Arizona



And the Glory – Isa.40:5

And the glory of the LORD
shall be revealed,
and all flesh
shall see it together:
for the mouth of the LORD
hath spoken it.

The Adoration of the Magi
Quentin Massys, Flemish, 1526



Accountability

- What does the Messiah expect of us?
- How can we prepare the way for Him to come?
- 2 prophets, Haggai & Malachi, offer an answer
- They lived just after the return from Babylon
- These prophets wanted worship to be acceptable
- They prepared for the coming of God's Son
- God will separate the wheat from the chaff

All Have Sinned and Fallen Short (Rom.3:23)

- **The prophets were thankful Messiah was coming**
- **But they knew they fell far short of His standard**
- **They encouraged others to repent and get ready**
- **Haggai is more focused on the house**
- **Malachi is concerned about what will be served**
- **Their words are very relevant for us today**
- **We prepare for Christ's Second coming**

Faded Glory

- The people were happy to be home from exile
- But they were far from Israel's former glory
- Jerusalem paled in comparison to Isaiah's vision
- There were no jewels on the gates
- The people of Judah were disillusioned

Rebuilding the Temple

- Haggai encouraged them to rebuild the Temple
- But the new building was a cheap imitation
- Haggai reminded the people of the future glory
- It will become even greater than Solomon's temple

Malachi and the Priests

- **Malachi wrote about 80 years after Haggai**
- **Malachi feared that priests were trying to fool God**
- **Religious leaders had become corrupt, greedy**
- **Only the sons of Aaron had access to the altar**
- **Malachi said they were doing a terrible job**
- **They kept the best of everything for themselves**
- **They were giving impure offerings to God**

And He Shall Purify

- Malachi could see a better day in the future
- God's Messiah will purify the sons of Levi
- They will become worthy to make offerings
- The refiner's fire removes impurities *inside*
- No one deserves God's grace
- Malachi calls us to purity, sincere worship
- This Christmas, don't just go through the motions
- Reach out to others; God has reached out to you



Thus Saith the LORD – Haggai 2:6-7

Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Yet once, a little while, and I will
shake the heavens, and the earth,
the sea, and the dry land; And I
will shake all nations, and the
desire of the nations shall come





The Lord, Whom Ye Seek – Malachi 3:1

**The Lord, whom ye seek,
shall suddenly come to his temple,
even the messenger of the covenant,
whom ye delight in:
behold, he shall come,
saith the LORD of hosts.**



But Who May Abide Malachi 3:2

But who may abide
the day of his coming?
And who shall stand
when he appeareth?
For he is like
a refiner's fire.

The Last Judgment
Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, 1541





And He Shall Purify Malachi 3:3

And he shall purify
the sons of Levi,
that they may offer
unto the LORD
an offering
in righteousness.

Rose Window
Notre Dame, Paris, 1225

