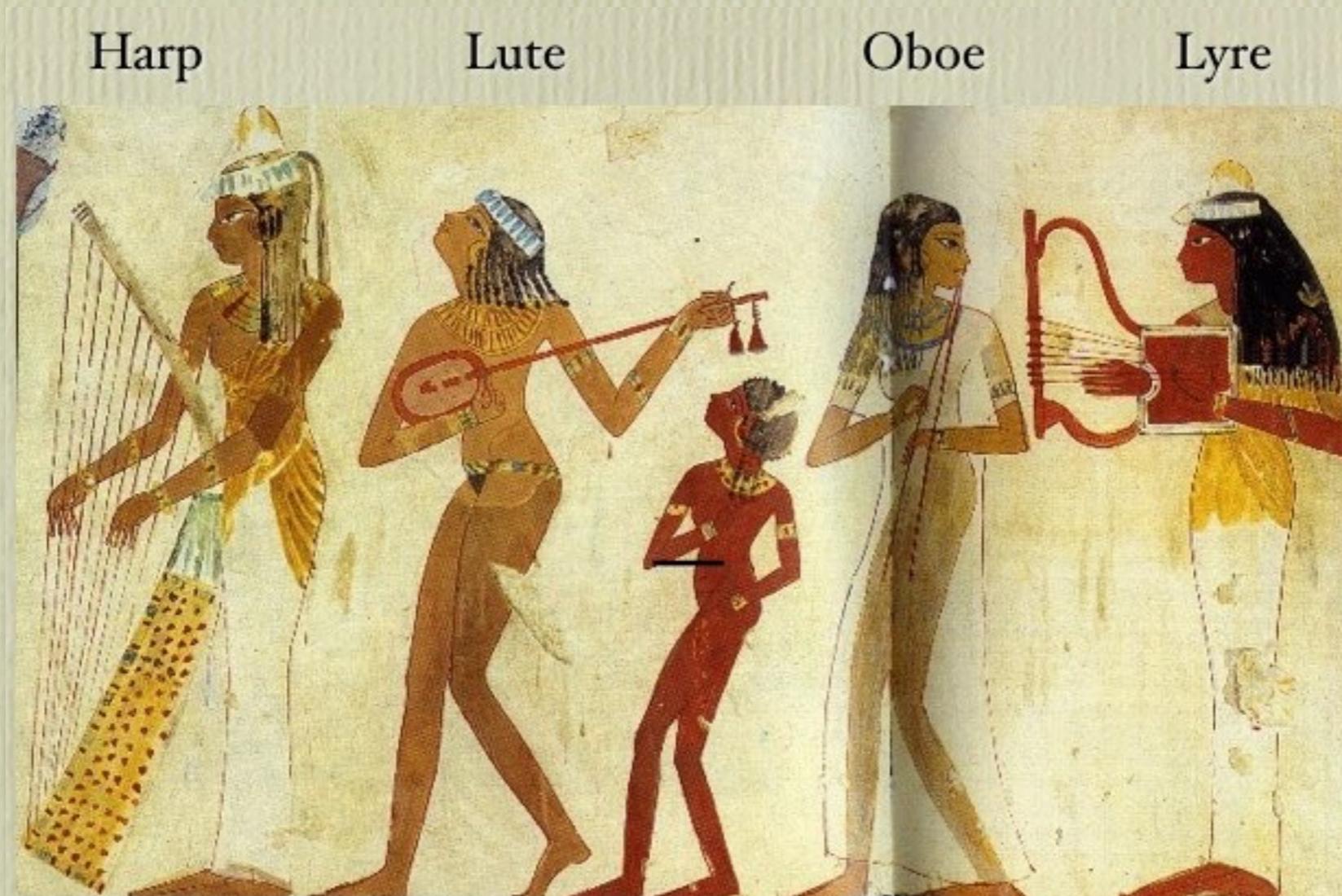


47. Psalms 147-150

Praying Psalm 147 with Jesus



Part One (verses 1-11; Greek Bible Psalm 146)

Part One is a call to praise GOD who sustains his creation and cares for those who look to God for love.

¹Praise GOD (Alleluia)!

How good it is to sing praises to our God;
for our God is gracious. To God our praise is due.

²GOD builds up Jerusalem, and bring back Israel's exiles.

³GOD heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds.

⁴GOD determines the number of the stars,
calling each by name.

⁵Great and almighty is our God*,
with wisdom that can never be measured.

‘GOD builds up Jerusalem, and bring back Israel’s exiles’ (verse 2).

There were those in the early Christian community who shared the perspective of the psalmist. Others saw that the God revealed by Jesus welcomed people into communion as they are. They did not need to change their culture to belong to the Christian movement. What was required of them was that they open their hearts to Jesus’ Spirit and learn to love as Jesus loved.

‘GOD heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds’ (verse 3).

We see this beautifully revealed in the ministry of Jesus. Matthew writes: ‘When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd’ (Matthew 9:36).

‘Jesus saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick’ (Matthew 14:14).

‘Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way”’ (Matthew 15:32).

Paul calls on us as disciples of Jesus to open our hearts to make space for Jesus’ compassion: ‘As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion’ (Colossians 3:12).

⁶GOD lifts up the oppressed,
[but humbles the wicked to the dust.]

⁷O praise GOD in song,
giving thanks with all your heart.
Make melody to our God on the lyre.

⁸It is GOD who covers the heavens with clouds,
preparing rain for the earth, making grass grow on the hills.

⁹GOD gives the animals their food,
and the young ravens when they cry.

¹⁰GOD's delight is not in horses, or in a warrior's strength.

¹¹GOD takes pleasure in those who revere ['fear'] GOD
in those who trust in GOD's covenant love.

Part Two (verses 12-20; Greek Bible Psalm 147: 1-9)

Part Two continues the theme of GOD as creator with the focus more on Jerusalem and on the special care GOD has for his chosen people.

¹²Praise GOD, Jerusalem! Zion, praise your God,
¹³who strengthens the bars of your gates,
and blesses your children within you.

¹⁴GOD grants peace on your borders,
and feeds you with finest wheat.

¹⁵GOD sends out a word to the earth,
¹⁶showers down snow like wool,
and scatters hoar-frost like ashes.

¹⁷GOD hurls down hail like crumbs.

The waters are frozen at GOD's touch.

¹⁸GOD sends out the command, and melts them.

At GOD's breath the ice melts and the rivers flow.

¹⁹GOD speaks words to Jacob, statutes and ordinances to Israel –

²⁰words unknown to other nations. Praise GOD (Alleluia)!

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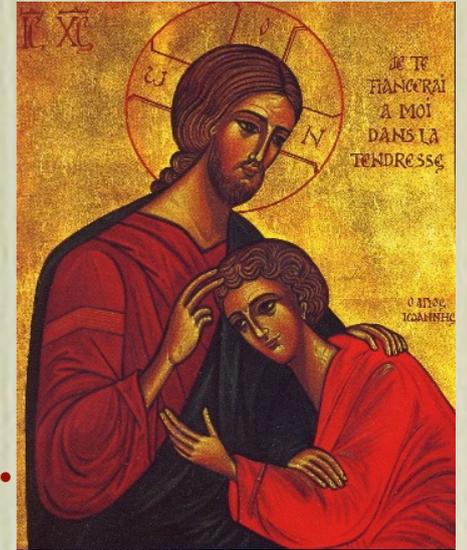
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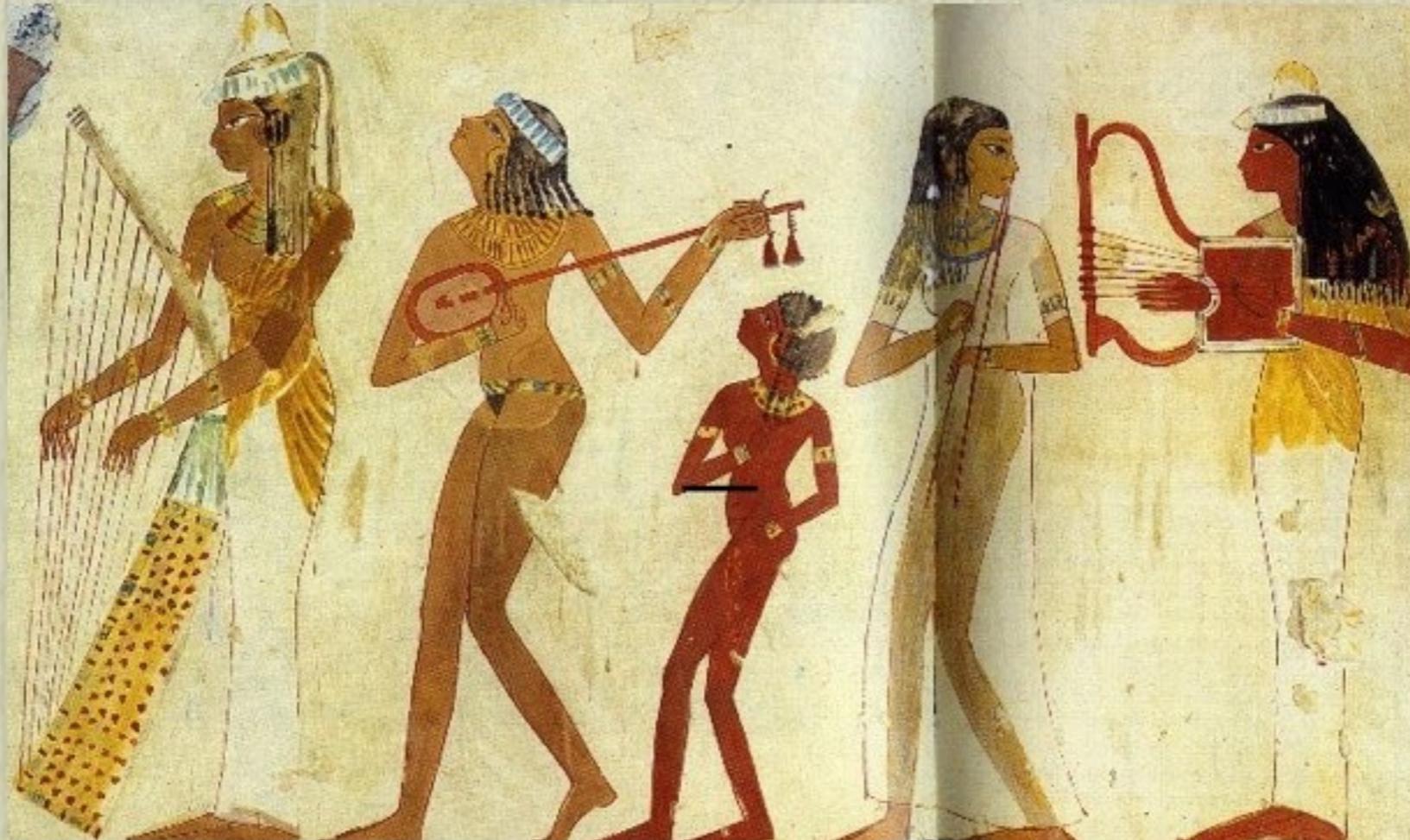
Praying Psalm 148 with Jesus

Harp

Lute

Oboe

Lyre



¹Praise GOD (Alleluia)!

Praise GOD from the heavens, from the heights.

²Praise GOD, all you angels, all you heavenly beings!

³Praise GOD, sun and moon.

Praise GOD, you glittering stars.

⁴Praise GOD, you highest heavens
and you waters above the heavens!

⁵Let them praise GOD,
for GOD commanded and they were created.

⁶It was GOD who established them,
fixing their place for ever and ever.

⁷Praise GOD from the earth, you creatures of the deep,

⁸fire and hail, snow and frost,
storms and winds, carrying out GOD's commands.

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⁷Praise GOD from the earth, you creatures of the deep,

⁸fire and hail, snow and frost,
storms and winds, carrying out GOD's commands.

⁹Praise GOD you mountains and hills,
you fruit trees and cedars,
¹⁰you wild beasts and tame, reptiles and birds.
¹¹Praise GOD you princes and judges,
you rulers and subjects,
¹²men and women, old and young.
¹³Let them praise GOD, who alone is exalted,
whose glory is above the earth and the heavens.
¹⁴GOD gives strength to the nation,
and glory to the faithful of Israel,
a people who are close to GOD.
Praise GOD (Alleluia)!

Humankind, acting like a conductor, summons all of creation to offer praise to GOD, and orchestrates the choirs of heaven and of earth to produce a cosmic harmony in honour of the Creator.

The disciples' experience of Jesus led them to expand their notion of God to include Jesus. Paul invites us to praise God incarnate in Jesus: 'God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Philippians 2:9-11).

Psalm 148

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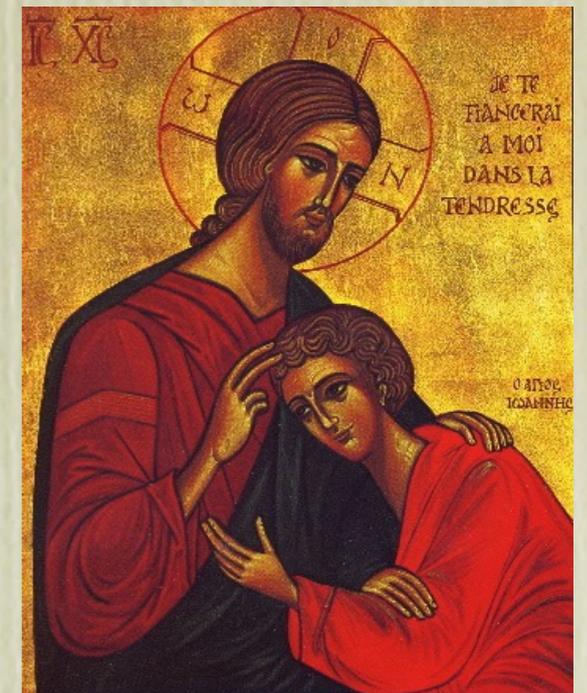
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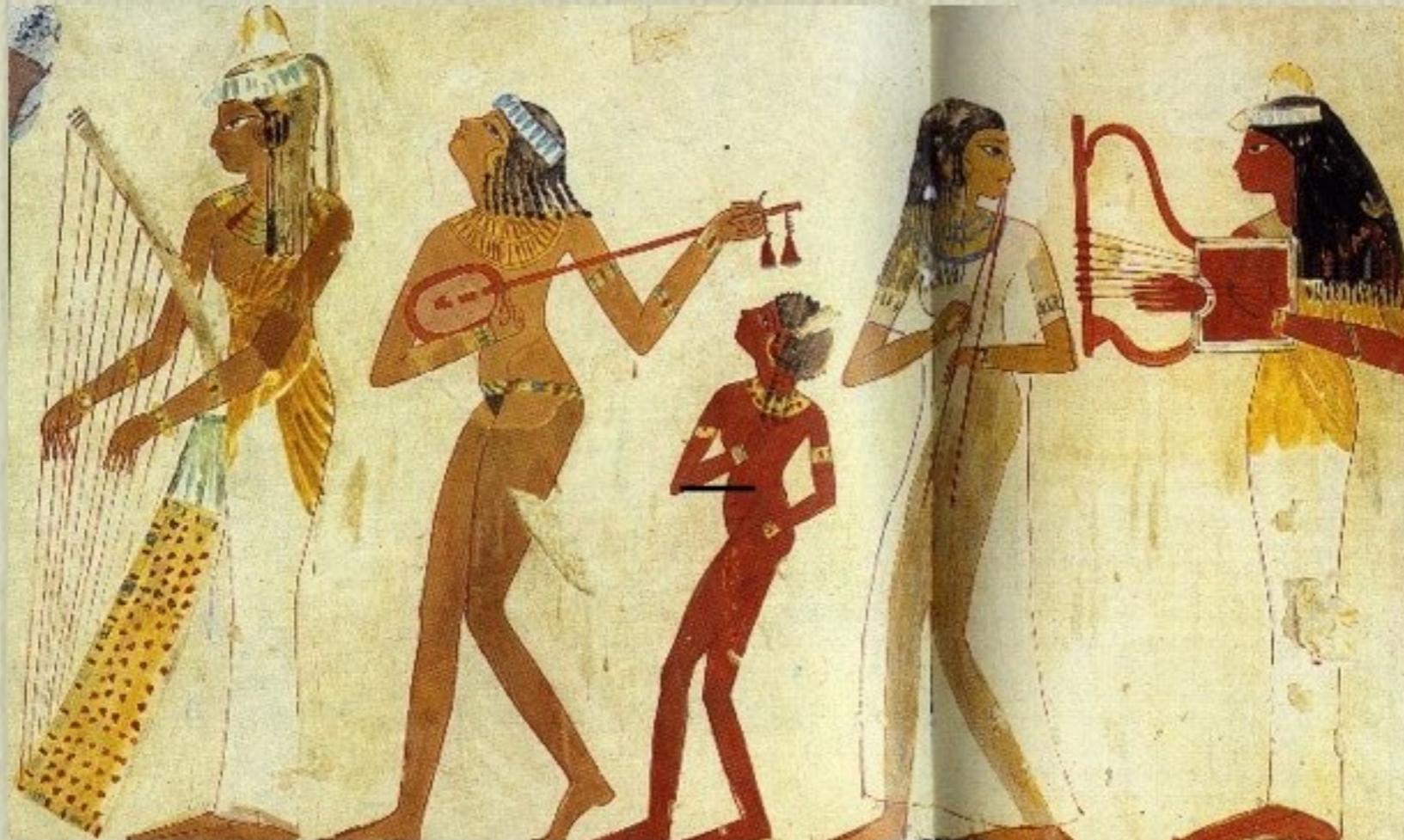
Praying Psalm 149 with Jesus

Harp

Lute

Oboe

Lyre



¹Praise GOD (Alleluia)! Sing to GOD a new song.

Praise GOD in the assembly of the faithful.

²Let Israel exult in its Maker.

Let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.

³Let them dance for GOD,

make melody with timbrel and harp.

⁴GOD delights in the people, and crowns the poor with victory.

⁵O you faithful exult in your glory. Take your rest and sing for joy.

⁶Let the praises of God resound on your lips.

The 'faithful' (*ḥasidim*, verse 1) are those who live by the 'covenant love' (*ḥesed*) of God.

‘Let them dance for GOD’ (verse 3). Is this a sword dance – a ritual celebration of victory in battle?

⁷Brandish swords in your hands,
to execute vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,

⁸to bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron,

⁹to execute on them the judgment decreed.

This is your glory, you faithful of God. Praise GOD (Alleluia)!

I suggest we omit these verses from our prayer

The sentiments of verses 7-9 need radical re-interpretation in the light of Jesus' teaching. During his arrest in Gethsemane Jesus said to one of his followers: 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword' (Matthew 26:52). Paul speaks about 'the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Ephesians 6:17). In the Letter to the Hebrews, too, the 'sword' is God's word (see Hebrews 4:12). Also in the Book of Revelation: 'From his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force' (Revelation 1:16; see 2:12).

Psalm 149

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Praise GOD in the assembly of the faithful.

²Let Israel exult in its Maker.

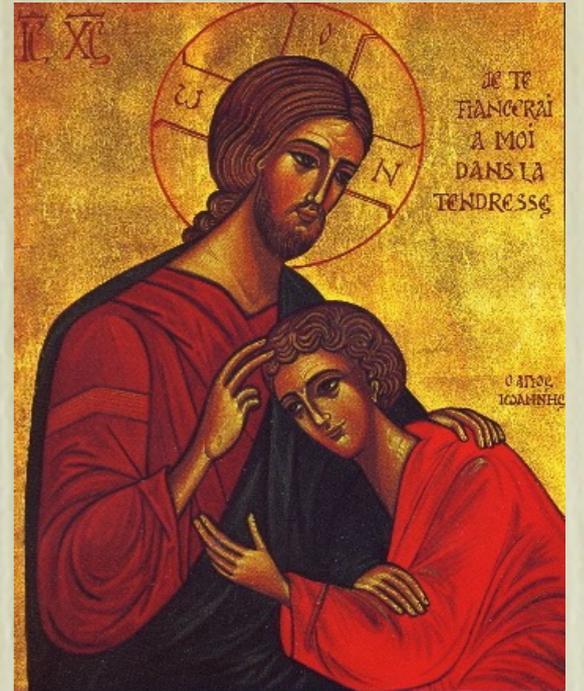
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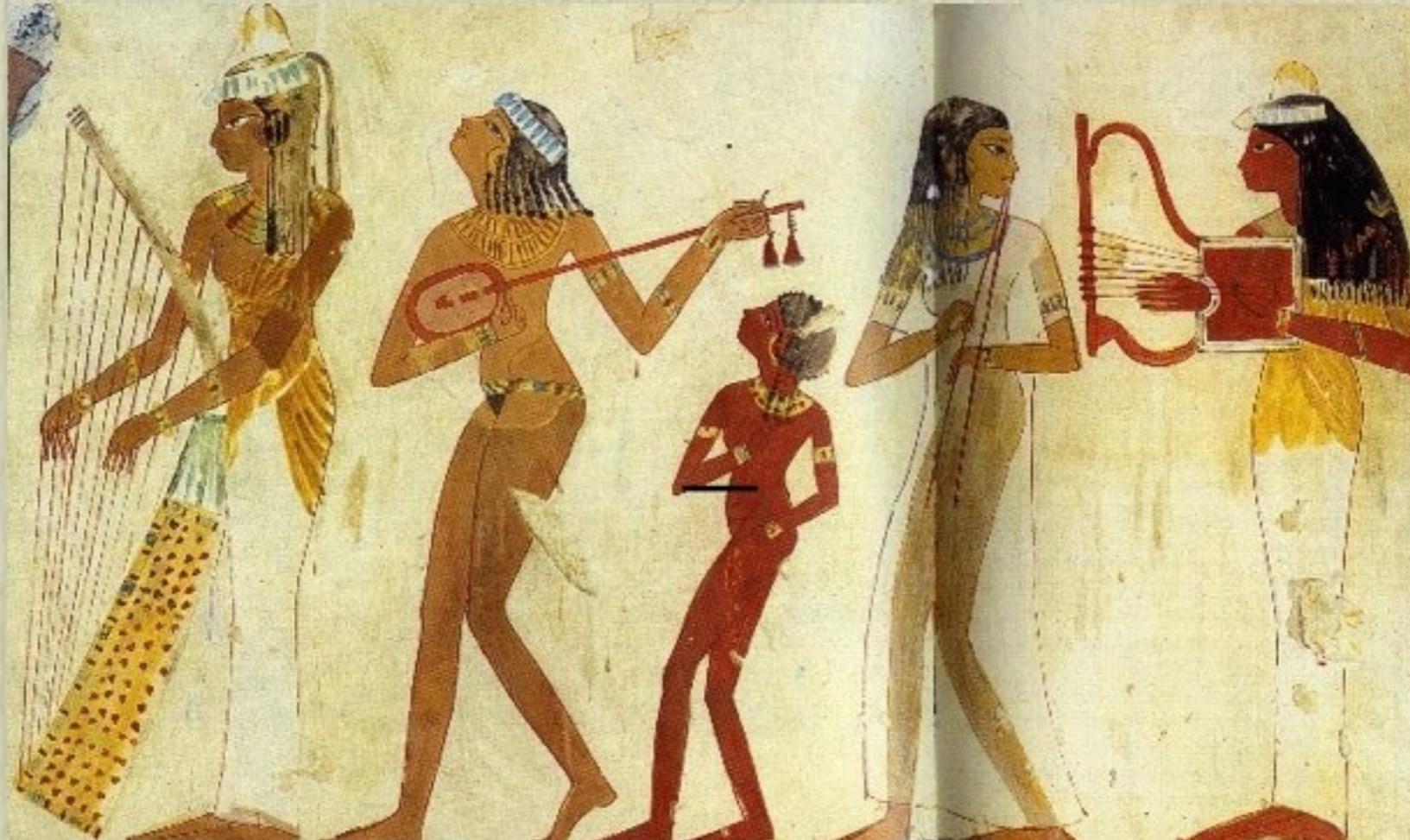
Praying Psalm 150 with Jesus

Harp

Lute

Oboe

Lyre



¹Praise GOD (Alleluia)! Praise God in the sanctuary!

Praise God in the mighty firmament!

²Praise God's mighty deeds!

Praise God's surpassing greatness!

³Praise God with trumpet blast!

Praise God with lute and harp!

⁴Praise God with tambourine and dance!

Praise God with strings and pipe!

⁵Praise God with the beating of drums!

Praise God with the clashing of cymbals!

⁶Let everything that lives and breathes praise GOD!

Praise GOD (Alleluia)!

This, the last psalm in the psalter, is a hymn praising GOD in the temple that GOD has chosen as his abode. The psalmist, however, is going beyond the temple building. He is calling on the temple of heaven (verse 1), and the temple of the whole of creation (verse 6) to acclaim God's 'surpassing greatness' (verse 2).

As we come to this psalm, praying it with Jesus, we pray that our whole lives will be, in Paul's words, for the praise of God's glory (see Ephesians 1:3-14).

Psalm 150

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Praise God in the mighty firmament!

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