**Jesus Set His Face**

Luke 9:51 records a crucial moment in Jesus’ ministry and mission. Fresh from hearing the voice of his Father speak words of encouragement (Your my beloved Son! I’m pleased with you!) on the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus is empowered to “set his face resolutely” toward Jerusalem knowing exactly that this journey would entail his suffering and death.  The chorus of “Jesus Set HIs Face” seeks to capture and linger in this crucial moment.

The verses of “Jesus Set HIs Face” highlight different facets of the Incarnation, that is, Jesus roundtrip journey from heaven to earth and back again.

Verse 1 Speaks of the downward journey

Verse 2 refers to the Psalms of Ascent sung by pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus surely would have self-consciously been reenacting this journey

Verse 3 makes reference to Jesus’ tears of the Jerusalem

Verse 4 highlights the loneliness and singularity to which Jesus was called

Verse 5 employs the final upward leg of the Incarnation, Jesus rising up in death with a slight hint of his final rising in victory

The verses are musically more complex than the chorus. Employing a soloist on verse one to teach a congregation the rhythm and tune of the verse would be prudent. Because of the lonely nature of verse 4, it would also be evocative to utilize a single voice only for that stanza.

Because of these textual dynamics, a slow gospel-blues setting seemed to be the most fitting musical genre. More than any other American style of the music, the blues give voice to the griefs of this life while the Gospel tradition demands at least a subtle shred of hope to be embedded in the mix.

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