

# How Far Is The Night

Huub Oosterhuis, after Is 21:11–12  
Translation by Tony Barr

Bernard Huijbers

INTRO/INTERLUDE/CODA: (♩. = ca. 48)

Keyboard

B♭m B♭ C B♭m B♭

(Fine) \*Three-part Choir:  
I (+All)

How far is the night, how

II

How far is the night,

III

How far is the night,

C (Fine) Fm Eb

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\*Any combination of voices, equal or mixed. For format options, see Performance Notes.

far, how far, watch-man? How  
how far, how far, watch-man?  
how far, how far, watch - man?

Db C Fm

This system contains three vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal staves are in treble clef with a key signature of three flats. The lyrics are: 'far, how far, watch-man? How', 'how far, how far, watch-man?', and 'how far, how far, watch - man?'. The piano accompaniment features a bass line in the left hand and chords in the right hand. Chord symbols 'Db', 'C', and 'Fm' are placed above the right-hand staff.

far is the night, the night? How  
How \_ far is the night, the night?  
How \_ far is the night, the night?

Eb Db C

This system contains three vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal staves are in treble clef with a key signature of three flats. The lyrics are: 'far is the night, the night? How', 'How \_ far is the night, the night?', and 'How \_ far is the night, the night?'. The piano accompaniment features a bass line in the left hand and chords in the right hand. Chord symbols 'Eb', 'Db', and 'C' are placed above the right-hand staff. A first ending bracket labeled '1' is present at the end of the system.

2

night? The morn-ing comes, says the watch-man, but

the night? The morn-ing comes, says the watch-man, but

the night? The morn-ing comes, says the watch-man, but

2 C Bbm Bb C

1 2 \*D.S.

still it is night. The night.

still it is night. The night.

still it is night. The night.

Bbm Bb 1 C 2 C \*D.S.

\*D.S. or D.C., *ad libitum*. See Performance Notes.

# Performance Notes

The text of *How Far Is The Night*, in its historic context, is the first of three short oracles during the time of the Jewish exile in Babylon. The nation is suffering hardship and God's word is being sought. The dialogue is between a pilgrim from the East and a prophet (the watchman). The night is a time of trial, the period of Babylonian domination. The message of the prophet is that the dawn may be glimpsed, even if only briefly, but it is still night. The door has been left open for the imminent dawn and relief from exile.

Liturgically the dialogue occurs in the temple during the night-watch liturgy. As in Psalm 130, the assembly has gathered in the temple to keep vigil, in anticipation of the coming age of the Messiah. We too, as a night-watch people, await the dawn and the coming of the Messiah. Yet in our night we know that the Day of the Lord is not only imminent but immanent; the Risen Lord is already returning to those who keep watch in faithful hope.

We may see this as a song of *Advent* hope, of *Lenten* purification and enlightenment, of a *general longing* for God's liberating power in our lives, as a beacon of hope within a *funeral* vigil or as a lamentation within a *reconciliation* vigil. It may be sung as a song of reflection within the liturgy of the word or at evening prayer.

There are many different ways of singing this piece. There are two suggestions:

*either:*

Prelude  
Section 1 three voice, repeated  
Section 2 three voice, repeated  
Interlude  
Section 1 three voice, repeated  
Section 2 three voice, repeated  
Postlude

*or:*

Prelude  
Section 1 soloist  
Section 1 three voice  
Section 2 soloist  
Section 2 three voice  
Interlude  
Section 1 three voice, repeated  
Section 2 three voice, repeated  
Postlude

The composer provided a chord structure with bass line as a model for an accompaniment. The keyboard version in this edition provides a simple form of accompaniment. More accomplished musicians may improvise around the basic harmonic and rhythmic patterns.

—Tony Barr

## Assembly Edition

**HOW FAR IS THE NIGHT**

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Translation by Tony Barr Bernard Huijbers

How far is the night, how far, how far, —  
 watch-man? \_ How \_ far is the night, the night?  
 The \_ morn-ing comes, says the watch-man, \_ but \_ still  
 it is night.

3 1 Repeat from beginning 2

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