

The First Christmas Song

Luke 2:8-14 (text v. 14)

This morning I want to preach about the first Christmas song. The first Christmas song was not sung by a famous crooner, or a hip-hop artist, or rock star—the first Christmas song was sung by a heavenly choir of angels (read text).

This song was the first Christmas song—A song about the birth of Jesus Christ—The most amazing event in the history of the world up to that point.

I don't know about you, but there is something about the songs of Christmas that brings me joy and makes me feel better when I hear them. Songs like...

Joy to the World

O Come all Ye Faithful

I'll Be Home For Christmas

We Wish you a Merry Christmas

The First Noel

Silent Night

Jingle Bells

How many of you have a favorite Christmas song? What is it? My personal favorite is "*The Little Saint Nick*" by the Beach Boys (just kidding!). Actually, my favorite is "*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*" (#135).

Charles Wesley wrote this hymn in 1738 when he was 31 years old. He and his brother John Wesley were preachers and the founders of the Methodist Church movement.

Unlike most songs written today, the lyrics of Wesley's hymns have great theological depth. For example, "*And Can It Be That I Should Gain,*" "*Christ the Lord is Risen Today,*" "*Jesus, Lover of My Soul,*" "*O, For A Thousand Tongues to Sing.*"

He wrote "*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*" based on our Bible text. The majestic lyrics of this old hymn are filled with deep doctrinal truths. Let's consider some of the Biblical truths we find in this great Christmas hymn:

I. It speaks of the MESSAGE of Christ's birth.

➤ The first stanza introduces **what the song is about**.

- A. It is about GOD'S GLORY. "*Glory to God in the highest*" focuses our attention on the One who set these events in motion.
- B. It is about GOD'S PEACE—Peace seems to be a pipe dream today. Conflict is everywhere— abroad... in the home... in politics... in society—Carjacking in the streets... road rage... school shootings, pushy Christmas shoppers, and on we could go.
 - **Where is the peace the angels spoke of?** It is found in Jesus. There can be no peace on earth, until men have peace with God. Jesus came so we could have "*peace with God*."
- C. It is about GOD'S MERCY—"...and mercy mild..." Mercy is when God withholds the punishment we justly deserve. God could have deserted us and left us to go on to self destruction and hell. But God, in "mercy mild," sent Jesus Christ to come and make reconciliation for us so we could have peace and salvation.
- D. It is about JOY! No wonder Wesley wrote: "Joyful all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies!" The greatest event in human history has just taken place. No greater joy than knowing Jesus.

II. It speaks of the MIRACLE of Christ's incarnation.

➤ The second stanza is about **who Christ is**. It is a theological lesson in poetic form of the doctrine of **Christology**:

- A. His DEITY / LORDSHIP — "Christ by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord! (John 1:1).
- B. His VIRGIN BIRTH — "Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of the virgin's womb." (Isa. 7:14).
- C. His INCARNATION — "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail, the incarnate deity." "*God was manifest in the flesh...*" (1 Tim, 3:16)
- D. His HUMANITY — "Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel." (John 1:14—"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...") **Immanuel— God with us.**

III. It speaks of the MEANING of Christ's coming.

➤ This stanza tells **what Jesus did for us**. It is a poetic lesson in the doctrine of **soteriology** — The doctrine of salvation.

- A. He gives us LIGHT AND LIFE— “Light and life to all He brings...”
1. John 8:12 - *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
Some people believe those who follow Jesus will be repressed, bored, and miserable. They are wrong! True life is found only in Him—Life more abundant.
 2. Jesus sheds light on the most vital issues of life. You will never see things as clearly as through the light of His Word.

On May 10, 1978, *The Bangor Daily News* reported a recall on a cookbook Random House published.¹ This cookbook was recalled because anyone who followed the recipe for Silky Caramel Slices on pages 230-231 “could cause a serious explosion.”

What was the problem? Spokeman William T. Loverd said that somehow the ingredient of water was left out of the recipe.

I thought, "There is a sermon there someplace."

God has given us the recipe for abundant life. He tells us what ingredients will make a joyful life. He says, "You want peace? Live according the recipe I've given in My Word, you'll enjoy peace and have eternal life."

But if you leave out any of God's ingredients, or stick in some of the ingredients of the world, life can blow up in your face. That is why there is so much depression, suicide, and heartache in life. Too many are following the wrong recipe for life.

- B. He has CONDESCENDED to us—“Mild He lays His glory by.”
Philippians 2:6-7— *"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the*

¹ [LINK](http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2457&dat=19780510&id=9c48AAAIBAJ&sjid=QC4-MAAAAIBAJ&pg=3992,3477631)—http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2457&dat=19780510&id=9c48AAAIBAJ&sjid=QC4-MAAAAIBAJ&pg=3992,3477631

likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Christmas is all about God coming to earth as a man, so men on earth might come to God.

- C. He gives us VICTORY OVER DEATH— “Born that man no more may die.” John 11:26— *“Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”* John 5:24.
- D. He gives us the SECOND BIRTH—“Born to give them second birth.” (John 3:3-7).

SUMMATION: The word **“Hark!”** means pay attention, something important has happened. Jesus said, *“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

God has intervened in history. He came down to earth to die for your sins and give you the gift eternal life if you will receive Him.

The word **“Hail”** means to acclaimed, salute, or acknowledge. When we acknowledge who Jesus is and what He has done for us, He promises us light, life, and the second birth.

Today, will you Harken to His words and Hail Him as YOUR Lord and Savior? Will you receive the SECOND BIRTH?