**HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING**

Sunday School Lesson 9

*Lessons from the Hymnbook*

Luke 2:9-15

12/4/2022

**Introduction:** As we turn the calendar to the month of December, we are going to direct our attention for the next few weeks to Christmas hymns. While we obviously know the general theme surround these hymns, I believe that we will see some varying points of Biblical emphasis as we journey through our hymn study of Christmas sons. For our first one, we are going to be looking at the song “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” This hymn was first published by Charles Wesley in 1739. At the time, there wasn’t a particular name for the hymn. It was just regarded by its author as a hymn for Christmas Day. The song looked different when it was first created, as there was no chorus for it. Most notably, the hymn started with a different line than what we are familiar with today. It started with “Hark, how all the welkin rings.” The word *welkin* refers to the sky or the heavens. This version of the song was not popular among church musicians, and George Whitefield later changed the start of the song to “Hark! The herald angels sing.” Some other modifications were made to the words of the song as well, and it was given a chorus. Wesley originally intended the song to be sung to the same tune of the Easter song *(Christ The Lord Is Risen Today.)* that he had written that same year. It wasn’t until a hundred years later that the song was fit to a different tune. Interestingly, the author of the tune had no intention of fitting that tune to a hymn, as he felt that the tune was too upbeat and not somber enough for sacred singing. Regardless of all of this, we are left today with a strong Biblical hymn for us to sing and enjoy.

1. **THE BIRTH OF JESUS DECLARES THE ARRIVAL OF THE KING.**
2. **Notice that the angels declared the birth of One born in the city of David (Luke 2:11; Revelation 17:14; Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 2:1-8).** When the angels appeared to announce the arrival of Jesus Christ, they did not expressly declare the arrival of the King. I believe there was a specific reason for this. While the Lord Jesus is the King of Kings, He came to earth with a mission of salvation not of ruling over the world. At the same time, the arrival of Jesus clearly declared the arrival of the King. We can see this in the angels’ declaration that He was born in the city of David. It was mentioned to connect the Lord directly to the throne of David, as prophesied in the book of Isaiah. We can also see the declaration of His Kingship in the response by the king at that time. When the wise men came to King Herod, they asked him where the King of the Jews was at. This question troubled Herod greatly. It’s likely that every Jew knew of the promise of the King who would come to deliver His people. When Herod consorted with the priests and scribes, they sent the wise men to the city of David – Bethlehem. It’s clear that Christ’s birth declared the arrival of the King.
3. **Notice that the birth of Christ is a call to all people to come and worship their King (Luke 2:10, 14; Isaiah 42).** We find two key phrases in the angels’ declaration that point to the arrival of the King of Kings. Remember that the Jews were primarily focused on the arrival of the King of the Jews, but the Lord’s arrival was so much bigger than just that. The King of all Kings came down to earth to redeem man. First, this should have brought peace on earth. With the perfect and holy King of the world here, mankind should have rallied around Him in peace. This is why the angels declared the peace on earth. They knew and understood that the King represent peace for all nations who might be willing to come to Him. Secondly, we see that the angels declared that the good tidings of great joy were for all people. The arrival of the King was not meant to be good tidings for the Jews only. It was meant to be good tidings for every person who willingly receives Him.
4. **THE BIRTH OF JESUS DECLARES THE ARRIVAL OF CHRIST, THE EVERLASTING LORD.**
5. **Notice that the angels declared with joy that their Lord had come down to earth (Luke 2:11; Matthew 1:21-23; 26:53).** In the angels’ declaration, we can plainly see that they are declaring the arrival of the One who is adored in Heaven. This is Christ the Lord. That word Christ means “anointed or chose one.” The angels declared that this was the One. They declared that this child was the Lord of Heaven that they serve. The virgin’s womb also declared that the Lord Jesus is Christ. He is the everlasting Lord. His life did not begin there in Bethlehem. He was not conceived of man. He is the eternal God. Before the foundations of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ was there (Colossians 1:17; John 8:58). The angels were doing more than just declaring that the King had come. They were declaring that God was there in Bethlehem!
6. **Notice that the birth of Christ declares that God has come down to dwell with man (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Romans 8:9).** The birth of Christ represents God dwelling with man. That’s what the angel declared unto Joseph in a dream. “They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” This is what mankind had been waiting for. The fall of man brought about the separation from God. Mankind had been waiting for thousands of years for the restoration of God dwelling with man. Of course, God never abandoned man, but He could not dwell right there with them. It might have seemed like He was “late in time,” but the Lord arrived exactly at the time appoint (Galatians 4:4). In the hymn, we sing that last line of the second stanza about being pleased as man with man to dwell. God not only was willing to come and dwell with man, but He was willing to come and take on the form of man in order to facilitate the reconciliation of God and man. While the Lord has ascended back up to Heaven currently, we are comforted in knowing that He will come again in all His power and glory.
7. **THE BIRTH OF JESUS DECLARES THE ARRIVAL OF THE RIGHTEOUS SON OF GOD.**
8. **Notice that the angels declare Jesus as the only begotten Son of God (1 Corinthians 15:28; Hebrews 1:5-8; Matthew 3:17; 1 John 4:10; Mark 14:61; John 3:16).** The angel of the Lord came to Mary and directly revealed Jesus as the only begotten Son of God. He is called the Son of the Most High. He was not Mary’s Son, and He definitely was not Joseph’s Son. He was born of His own Spirit (Luke 1:35). Hail the Son of Righteousness. He is the only One to be born of a virgin birth. The Bible makes it clear that He was birthed of His own Spirit that came upon Mary. He has the righteous scepter in His hand. The Son of God laid all of His glory down so that He could go to the Cross and break the curse of sin and death. Although He is the Son of God, He was born to raise the sons of the earth and give them the opportunity for that second birth. Adam became the son of sin, and by him, we were all condemned. Christ came as the Son of righteousness, and by Him, we all have hope for eternal life. He came with light and live to give.
9. **Notice that the birth of Christ declares that Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).** The prophet Isaiah regards the Lord Jesus as the Prince of Peace. As the Son, He has come as the Prince of Peace. We might say that He is the ambassador or facilitator of peace between us and the Father. His Father desires peace with man. The Lord Jesus as a faithful and righteous Son made the way possible for that peace to take place. The Bible talks about rebellious and riotous sons. These are those who cause nothing but problems for their parents. During His earthly ministry, Christ was singularly focused on performing the will of God. Imagine getting to bring into the world the One who can offer real peace to anyone who desires it. After all, He told His disciples that His peace He had given unto them. He had left it for them to use as they needed it. Likewise, we still have that same Prince of Peace today, and we are adopted into His family.
10. **THE BIRTH OF JESUS DECLARES THE DESIRE OF NATIONS TO BE FULFILLED.**
11. **Notice that the birth of Christ declares that Desire of Nations has come (Haggai 2:7; Matthew 2:1-4).** The last stanza of the song references what we find in Haggai 2:7. The Bible says: “And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts” As we mentioned previously regarding Christ as King, the Bible also calls Him the Desire of Nations. We can see this to be true in the wise men who came from a far place. They came and desired to see Jesus. They were not interested in political favor. They brought gifts to give to the Desire of Nations. As we are sharing the Gospel, let’s remember that we are sharing the message that all the nations of the world desired to see and to have. There are still countries in the world who are desiring a Saviour. They don’t know where to look
12. **Notice that the birth of Christ gave the world hope that they had not known in a long time (Ephesians 2:12).** The rest of the last stanza of the song goes back to comparing Christ as that Second Adam. The last time that we had one man without sin, we see that he fell in the Garden. Previous to Christ’s birth, the nations of the world had very little to celebrate or get excited about. They would just bounce from one pagan god to the next, and none of those “gods” had power to do anything in their lives. When Christ was born in Bethlehem, everything was made different for the future of the nations. Those nations who had not regarded the Lord were having their eyes opened to the Gospel. This continues to this day. Again, we must be reminded that it is our responsibility to shine the light of the Gospel to those in this world. We must do it diligently and as often as we can. There are lost nations out there that are needing to hear.