

'AWAY TO THE MANGER'
(Touched by an Angelic Choir)
Luke 2:8-17

Patent Pending 'Music'

One of the most noticeable differences between biblical Christianity and religion is that Christianity has great music. Other religions may have repetitious chanting and hypnotic, monotone mantras to utter but they are mere noises in comparison with the creative, joyful Christ-centered music that the Holy Spirit inspires and expresses through God's people (***Ephesians 5:17-21***).

Although Roman Catholicism integrated the secular monotone music of the Medieval Era (Gregorian chanting), real Spirit-filled music is inspiring, illuminating, and spiritually invigorating (***Psalms 66:1-4, 100:1-2, 126:1-3; James 5:13***). Although we know heaven always has been and always will be filled with angelic worship in song (***Revelation 5:9-14, 15:3-4, 19:1-7***), it is safe to believe that music made in heaven filled the air at the Lord's first advent arrival in Bethlehem (***Luke 2:13-14***).

The spotlight of God's glory came on and angels from heaven took to the outdoor stage with their greatest hit in heaven, 'The Glory to God' song. Following the concert, shepherds in attendance were moved to meet the Composer in a nearby stable. After meeting Him and His parents, they went door-to-door repeating the sounding joy they'd heard earlier from angels at the concert (***Luke 2:15-17***). In the days that followed, it seems that Mary remembered and recorded the angels' song (***Luke 2:19***) and the shepherds went back to work singing it (***Luke 2:20***).

The Holy Spirit has been giving His people songs like it before and ever since (***Psalms 32:7, 33:1-3, 40:3, 144:9; Ephesians 5:19, James 5:13, Acts 16:25***). While the world religions mutter and moan, chant and drone, biblical Spirit-filled Christians praise the true and living God with joyful songs from hearts that have been transformed through personal relationship with Christ (***John 7:37-38***).

But what was it about that music those angels sang that proved the anointing of God was upon it? What is there about Spirit-filled music that assures a Spirit-filled result in those who sing it and hear it? There is a lot of so-called Christian music today that seems to lack some of the features to be expected of musical praise that is copyrighted in heaven and distributed for His glory on earth. Using the angel's song and Scripture, there is a spiritual criteria to use in being sure music is from the 'Pleasing to God' label:

- 1) God's glory is the purpose shining forth from every line (***1 Corinthians 10:31***)
- 2) The Son of God is always mentioned in some clear way (***Colossians 3:15***),
- 3) The way of salvation is always clear and never artistically vague (***1 Corinthians 12:15***)
- 4) There is never conflict between the song's message and sound biblical doctrine (***1 Timothy 4:13-16***)
- 5) All Christian music is to be done with a gracious 'decency and order' that is characteristic of all God's works (***1 Corinthians 14:33, 40***)
- 6) The effect upon listeners is always some aspect of spiritual 'edification' (***1 Corinthians 12:12***) and
- 7) Christian music should lead the listener to a closer and much deeper relationship with God and the family of God – its never just entertainment (***Luke 2:15-17 & Hebrews 10:24-25***).

The gift of music from God to His church is a tremendous blessing of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, some artists have abused their spiritual gift for mercenary gain and personal celebrity purposes (***Matthew 10:8-10, Acts 8:20-21, 1 Corinthians 6:1-7, etc.***), but this doesn't negate the music God gave them to share with His people, the Church. One of the greatest Christmas gifts of God is music and the ability to 'make a joyful noise unto the Lord' with it in this life and in the eternal life to come (***Hebrews 2:12 / from Psalm 22:22***).

Praise in the Pasture
(The Angelic Birth Notice / Bethlehem, 4 BC)

Luke 2:8-18

Terrified by an Angel
(Fear of The Lord Precedes Faith in HIM)

vs. 8-12

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were greatly afraid.

Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior, Who is Christ, the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

Why does ‘fear of the Lord’ necessarily precede ‘faith’ in those He is reaching?

Do you remember experiencing F.O.T.L. as God brought you to know Christ?

What was it like and how was it helpful in awakening your soul to its need of the Lord?

When would it be a good idea to pray for F.O.T.L. for others? or yourself?

Blessed by the Angels
(Knowledge of The Lord Precedes Faith in HIM)

vs. 13-14

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Angels appeared with this previously unknown message. Now that the message has been conveyed to people, it is people who belong to the Lord who must present the message.

The angels share truth that they know and have experienced in heaven that now has come to earth. How do you suppose this outdoor concert affected the shepherds?

What lessons can we learn from the angels about effectively sharing our testimony with others?

Moved to the Angel-Maker
(Coming to the Lord Produces Faith in HIM)

vs. 15-17

“So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”

And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying, which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”

It was probably late at night that the shepherds went into town. What was the urgency? Who took care of their flocks while they were gone? What might have happened if they had delayed?

Their immediate response to the message was rewarded with a personal encounter with their new ‘spiritual shepherd’. How did their vocation help them understand the event?

The shepherds became the first human evangelists of the good news of Christ. As they went door to door, what lessons from their own angelic event helped them to witness?

What results can we expect as we tell others what and Who we have found in Jesus?