

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CANTATA



TEXT: ***Luke 2:13,14** 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, good will toward men.*

INTRO.: A. Usually the "*angel of the Lord*" is none other than our Savior. If that is the case here then He may have been the Choir Director for "*The First Christmas Cantata!*" In verses 8-11 He makes an announcement of His own birth & then is immediately joined by "*a multitude of the heavenly host praising God...*" A "*multitude*" is a vast throng. It is if the entire host of heaven paused to sing the praises of, He Who would clothe Himself with humanity.

B. At every really special occasion the host were present. At creation the "*morning stars sang together & all the sons of God shouted for joy.*" (*Job 38:7*) They had witnessed the myriad of stars and planets flung into the infinitude of space by the sheer Word of His power. *This host* may have included the Cherubim from around God's throne, the six-winged Seraphim, the Archangel Michael and the uncountable and amazing creatures called simply "*angels.*"

TRANS.: Tonight we will break their song down into 3 "stanzas"...

I. STANZA #1: "glory"

A. An Old Song:

1. The angel's ministry is to bring praise and glory to the Creator
2. In fact all of creation was originally programmed to do the same

ILLUS.: From the tiniest microbe to the mighty leviathan all the sea creatures were created to praise His majestic Name. From the simple sparrow to the most spectacular bird of paradise, the winged creatures were to sing His praise. From the dew on the earth to the farthest star in the galaxies the creation was to sing His praise! The simplest amoeba to the most complex creature (man), all were designed to show His infinite Being. The moss on the tree to the beautiful rose are simply reflections of His fantastic and infinite variety. (Ps. 148)

3. The fall of man shifted all praise to the minor key
4. The unfallen angels alone can sing with untainted melody and harmony

B. A New Theme:

1. The angels had sung of the wonders of His creation
2. Now they sang the sweet song of His redemption

ILLUS.: The angels have an unusual interest into God's unique plan for fallen man "*which things the angels desire to look into.*" *1 Pet. 1:12*

"There is more in (redemption) than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger than in worlds on worlds rolling their grandeur round the throne of the Most High." Spurgeon

3. The grace, glory and mercy of the Creator is manifest in the Redeemer!

II. STANZA #2: "peace"

A. A New Song:

1. Stanza #1 ("**glory**") was an old, old song w/the angels – that was heaven's eternal theme
2. Stanza #2 is an all new song for fallen planet earth:
 - a. Before the fall this song could have been sung – it would have been natural
 - b. Since that Cherubim drove man out of the Garden, there has never again been peace

B. An Old Theme:

1. Man has been singing, talking and promising "**peace on earth**" ever since the fall, but the angels in heaven knew better
2. The Law of God was given, not in peace, but with "**thunders and lightening, and darkness and death**"
3. Statesmen, soldiers, Popes and politicians have been seeking peace for millennia w/total frustration
4. But now the Prince of Peace shows up and the angels correctly announce "**peace on earth**"
 - a. Sacred peace between the Savior & the sinner became a reality
 - b. The long sought after peace bet. man and his neighbor became a possibility

NOTE: God's people are to "**live at peace w/all men, as much as is possible.**" Make peace w/your neighbor, loved ones, friends, family, community, in business, your church and even w/your enemy!

5. Finally His coming guarantees a peaceful future where the Prince of Peace will snap the spear of war and the Lord will remove fang & claw, horn and venom from all His creatures

ILLUS.: When the "**government is upon His shoulders**" men will "**beat their swords into plowshares & their spears into pruning hooks**" and "**neither shall they learn war anymore!**" West Point, Annapolis, & the Air Force Academy will close down. All the animals in zoos will be set free!

Isaiah 11:6-9 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

(The Amillennialist must spiritualize all of this to justify his unscriptural position!)

III. STANZA #3: "good will"

A. A Glad Refrain:

1. We have sinned against His grace, but He has good will towards us
2. We have used His holy Name in vain, but He has good will towards us
3. "**Good will**" is the Good News: God parted w/His only Son to establish that!
4. We may have ill will towards Him, but He has nothing but good will towards us

B. A Harmonious Hymn:

1. With all the discordant notes man has sounded toward God, He sends His heavenly host to sing this harmonious hymn to man
2. If you ever doubted God's good will toward man, look to that sky filled w/angelic beings and listen to their message of peace and good will, but most of all look to that manger and God stooping to become man that He might die in man's stead!

ILLUS.: There lies the Infinite clothed as an infant; the Ancient of Days born of a woman; the Mighty God cloaked in humanity; the Everlasting Father disguised as a son of Mary! **No wonder the angels sang!**

CONCL.: This may have been one of the shortest cantatas ever sung, but it is also the most profound! It is surely the most significant. It carries the most weighty message w/ramifications for today and tomorrow. It deals w/God's relationship w/man thru redemption & via the incarnation, as well as with God's plan for man's future on earth and eternity. 14 powerful words comprise one of the most important songs in Scripture!

Three closing questions: Do YOU **glorify** God? Are YOU saved?
Are YOU at **peace** w/God?
Have YOU **received** God's good will?

