

Songs of Christmas – “ANNUNCIATIO ANGELI” **Luke 2:8-20**

There are four songs recorded in Luke's Gospel which are associated with the birth of Jesus Christ. They are the first Christmas carols, *Magnificat*, *Benedictus*, *Annunciatio Angeli*, *Nunc Demittis*. Three of these are in *The Hymnbook*. The *Annunciatio Angeli* is not. If you are familiar with Handel's *Messiah* it is the oratio that begins, "Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest! And on earth peace to men of good will."

The Annunciation is the name for historical record of the angel Gabriel coming to Mary to announce that she would be the mother of the Christ of God. *Annunciatio Angeli* means "the announcement of the angels" and it is the name for the announcement by thousands of angels of the birth of Jesus Christ, God's Son in human flesh to a handful of poor shepherds and yet an announcement intended for all people, announcing Good News for all mankind.

Can you imagine what that choir of angels sounded like? It is the choir that normally performed in heaven for God. When I hear a really fine choir singing such as the one which sings Handel's *Messiah* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, I cannot imagine how any choir could be better. I know the angel choir which sang for those shepherds was better than any choir of mortal beings could be.

1.) 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." (Luke 2:8-12 NKJV)

The Almighty God did not announce the birth of His Son, the long awaited Messiah, in the court of Caesar Augustus, nor in the Temple in Jerusalem. He sent His angel to the lowliest class of people in Judaea, to shepherds. As the angel of the LORD stood before them, the glory of the LORD shone around them. This glory caused Moses' face to shine so brightly that when he came away from the presence of God, he covered his face. This was the glory that descended upon the Tabernacle when it was dedicated. When the Temple was dedicated the glory of the LORD came down upon it. This glory which shone around the shepherds was also seen by the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. We shall see that glory in the heavenly city.

The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. (Revelation 21:23 NKJV)

The shepherds 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." (Luke 2:10-12 NKJV)

The angel's message to the shepherds was threefold -1.) There is nothing to fear I bring you good news that will be joy for all people. Today in David's city a Savior is born, Christ the Lord. 2.) This is the sign by which you will know Him. He is a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a feeding trough for animals. 3.) Implied in the words "for all people" is a duty for the shepherds to tell others what they have heard and what they find.

2.) 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!" (Luke 2:13-14 NKJV)

The word which is translated multitude literally means thousands. The choir of heaven had come to earth to sing an anthem in celebration of Jesus' birth. They were there to praise God for Jesus' birth. His birth brought both glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to mankind.

There is glory to God because He loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

There is glory to God for the mighty miracle by which the eternal, omnipotent Son of God took upon Himself the form of a servant being born in the likeness of man. God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law.

There is peace on earth in the hearts of all who have found peace with God, through Jesus Christ. There is peace between brothers and sisters in Christ who let the mind of Christ rule in their hearts, who forgive as Christ has forgiven them, who prefer one another in love.

One day there will be peace throughout the world, when Jesus, The Prince of Peace, sits on David's throne to rule all the nations.

The phrase "good will toward men" is sometimes translated "to men of good will." In Isaiah 48: 22 and Isaiah 57: 21 God says "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked." The wicked want to quarrel, and war, and wrestle what belongs to others and add it to their own possessions. Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? (James 4:1 NKJV)

3.) 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. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. (Luke 2:15-20 NKJV)

The response of the shepherds to the announcement by the angels was threefold.

The shepherds went to Bethlehem to see for themselves this thing that had come to pass which the Lord had made known to them. They hurried to get there. They saw Mary and Joseph and the Babe lying in a feeding trough for animals just as the angel had told them. When two of the disciples of John the Baptist followed Jesus, He said, "Come and see." When you tell someone about Jesus and what He has done for you, they need to see what you told them working in you and in the other members of the church.

Then the shepherds made this good news widely known. They told what they had seen and what the angel said concerning this Child. They didn't keep it to themselves. They weren't silenced by those who laughed and mocked. They didn't choose who they would tell. They broadcast the good news like a farmer throwing seeds onto a field.

Finally, the shepherds remembered Who it was that sent the angels and Who sent the promised Savior in the form of a Babe. They glorified and praised God for all the things they had heard and seen.

"Who would have thought to see the Day

When Potter climbed inside the clay?" Source unknown

