

# Songs of Praise the Angels Sang



Worship is an integral part of our Christian life. We are no strangers to praising God through song—we love to make joyful noise—and yet in this hymn we are presented with a new way to think about our musical offerings to God.

For the writer of this hymn, “songs of praise” are a distinctly angelic form of worship. At pivotal moments in cosmic history, the angels are described as most enthusiastic singers. On the day of creation, “heaven with alleluias rang.” The angels lifted their voices “when the Prince of Peace was born” and again that first Easter. We can anticipate a similar celebration on the day when “God will make new heavens and earth.”

Despite defining such songs as angel-perfected, the final two stanzas connect Christians on earth with the angels in heaven. The hymn offers us a pointed challenge: “shall Christians fail to sing?” “No” is our firmly sung answer. We “delight[. . .] to raise psalms and hymns and songs of praise,” and are reminded by the hymn’s conclusion that we can “learn” a great deal about praising God even while we remain “here” on earth.

Our earth-bound praises are certainly humbler than those offered by the angels. Events of cosmic significance are rare in our world. However, this hymn, and the angel chorus, encourages us to sing “still,” both out of the joy we experience when we encounter God and as practice for when we will also “sing above.” We are tasked with continuing to praise God for the gifts of creation and Christ and for the promise of a newly formed world, as well as with remaining alert to more modest examples of “faith and love” that merit praiseful song. As we “rejoice” “with heart and voice” for all that is good in our world, over all the times we catch glimpses of the kingdom of God, we take our place among the “Saints.” May our worship make us worthy of such distinction.

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