

Gloria in Excelsis Deo

Latin for "Glory to God in the highest"

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 Luke 2:1-20

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In the **Gospel of Luke**, what happens to **John the Baptist** happens to **Jesus**; but what happens to Jesus is greater because He is the **Son of God**. Both are miracle babies, both are announced by angels, both had songs of praise sung about them. But today **THE COMPARISON STOPS** when Angels fill the skies singing about the birth of Jesus. John the Baptist never had a sky full of Angels singing about him. But Jesus did!

We are familiar with this story, because it's a key part of the **Christmas story** from Luke 2:

And, lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon the Shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (join me . . .)

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." Luke 2:13-14

Today, this song of the Angels is called the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* (= Glory to God in the highest!).

In this song, Heaven and earth overlap; earthly men see heavenly angels; shepherds hear with their own ears angelic voices from Heaven. **Heaven and earth overlap!** The *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* is God announcing to the World the birth of His Son in a grand and majestic way!

This Song of the Angels is easy to study because there are only two parts to it: **Glory to God** and **Peace on Earth**.

Glory to God is about God the Father for sending His Son to be the Savior of the world. Glory means *praise* and *honor*, *exaltation* and *thanksgiving*. The birth of Jesus marks the fulfillment of 4,000 years of promises. Up to this point in history, God had been promising to send a Savior, the *Messiah*, who would crush Satan's head Gen 3:15, save God's People Isaiah 53, and bless the entire earth Gen 12:3. **God has now kept those Promises!**

- ⇒ **Rejoice! Rejoice! For Immanuel has come to us!**
- ⇒ **Joy to the World! The Lord is come!**
- ⇒ **Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes, The Savior promised long ago;**
- ⇒ **The Savior of the nations has come!**

The Angels sing **Glory to God in the highest** because God is faithful to His Word and true to His Promises – **the Savior has been born in Bethlehem!**

The second part of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* tells us the reason for Jesus' birth: He will bring **Peace on Earth and goodwill to men!** That is certainly *good tidings of great joy* for us; because sin has brought all kinds of chaos, hostility and dissension to the earth.

Ever since Adam disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, there has been enmity between us and God. It culminated several times in Old Testament: Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden; God sent a flood to destroy the rebellious people on earth; The Lord dispersed sinful men at Babel and confused the languages; and the Lord even sent the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem, to burn down the Temple, and to take His own People Israel into exile! Sin has brought all kinds of chaos, hostility and dissension to the earth.

This enmity with God is even seen *in our own lives*. We have original sin that leads to actual sins. We all have a trail of chaos, hostility and rebellion behind us because of sin. Our heart grows cold and hard; and we get tangled up in many an various kinds of immorality and disobedience. The

sign that all of this is true is death. We all will die because we are all rebellious towards God. Original Sin affects every single one of us!

But God intervened to put a stop to this chaos, hostility and enmity. He sent His Son, the Prince of Peace, to reconcile you with Himself. The reason Jesus was born in Bethlehem is to bring peace between you and God. His perfect life, and His sacrificial death, reconciles you with God. In His resurrection you were made new! There is no more hostility; there is no more wrath against your sin; there is no more death and condemnation. The Prince of Peace has brought forgiveness, peace, and eternal life to all men of every nation and every language! You are most certainly included!

**In Christ, there is God's peace on earth
and God's goodwill to men!**

One of the most destructive things in our lives is guilt. Guilt separates you from God; it creates a fear of punishment; it drives you to run away from God. A guilty conscience makes God seem distant; and you are ashamed to approach Him.

Because of God's **goodwill**, His **grace and mercy**, Christ took your guilt to the cross so that you now have **peace** with God. If you struggle with past guilt, be sure to apply this to yourself! Your guilt is gone. Jesus was crucified for your sin and guilt. No matter what it is, no matter how terrible it feels: **IT HAS BEEN PAID FOR!** It's gone. You now have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* celebrates the **peace** and **goodwill** that Christ brings to the earth and gives all glory and honor to God the Father in Heaven! It truly is “**good tidings of great joy for all people!**”

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and God's goodwill to men!**

There is one other interesting thing about the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*.
These words bookend Jesus' life.

Jump ahead 33 years; it is now *Palm Sunday*, and Jesus begins His final journey to the cross. On Palm Sunday, the crowds will greet Him with their own *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* :

As He was drawing near--already on the way down the Mount of Olives--the whole multitude of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the Name of the Lord! *Peace in heaven and Glory in the highest!*"

Luke 19:37-38

The Gospel of Luke begins and ends Jesus' life with the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. **What begins in Bethlehem will end in Jerusalem.** The Incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God, was for the purpose of dying on a cross for all people. The Christmas story leads to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.
Because of Jesus, there is now peace on earth and peace in heaven!

The reason the Son of God came into the world was to destroy the devil's work of sin, guilt and death. Jesus destroyed the devil by His death, and in His resurrection, freed us from the devil's power: sin, guilt and death. God's Christmas gift to you is forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and eternal life.

The Gospel of Luke begins and ends Jesus' life with the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. **We are to never forget that what began in Bethlehem will end in Jerusalem.** The Christmas story leads to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.
Because of Jesus, there is now peace on earth and peace in heaven!

Gloria in Excelsis Deo – which was sung by the Angels and shouted by the people on Palm Sunday – continues to be our song today!

Glory be to God on High
for His peace and goodwill
in His Son Jesus Christ!

AMEN!