

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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It was a “**plethora**” of Angels that night outside Bethlehem. That’s the word that is used in the Greek. **Plethora**. It means “full” or a “great number.” The sky was filled with angels; a great number of them were singing an angelic song in praise of the birth of the Messiah, the Christ!

And suddenly there was with the angel a “plethora” 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 known as the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*¹ – which means “Glory to God in the Highest!”

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 as He sent 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!**

¹ In this song, Heaven and earth overlap; earthly men see heavenly angels; shepherds hear 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!

In response we sing . . .

- ⇒ **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 also sang **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**² between God and men on earth. Just think of

- ➡ Adam and Eve were removed from the Garden of Eden for their sin;
- ➡ The worldwide flood that destroyed the rebellious people on earth in Noah's day;
- ➡ The Lord dispersing sinful men at Babel and confusing the languages;
- ➡ the Lord even sent the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem, to burn down the Temple, and to take His own People into exile because of their unrepentant idolatry, rebellion, and immorality!

Sin has brought all kinds of chaos, hostility and rebellion to the earth. It creates **enmity** between God and men.

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

² The word enmity means “a state or feeling of being actively opposed or hostile to someone or something.” Interestingly, it is a negative prefix added to the word for “friendly relations.” A related word for enmity is “enemy.” Sin creates this “enmity” with God, and ONLY Jesus can reconcile us with the Father.

us because of sin. Our heart grows cold and hard; and we get tangled up in many and 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!**”

In Christ, there is God's peace on earth
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!

*Glory to God in the highest,
peace on earth,
and good will toward men.*

**Lord we thank you for the
message of the Angels,
and ask that You help us to take it
to heart and believe it as we
celebrate Christmas.**

**Grant us Your peace and goodwill
through Jesus our Savior.**

**Help us to live lives of peace and
goodwill as your people.**

**We pray this in Jesus Name and by
the power of the Holy Spirit,
Amen!**

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. .

. . 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Luke 2:1-20

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem;* (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. 15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.
