

CHRISTMAS JOY AND HAPPINESS

Rev. Norman H. Reuter

*Lessons: Luke 1:26-38, Apocalypse Revealed 743,
or True Christian Religion 82.*

Why is it that the coming of Christmas fills us with so much joy? Why do we gladly start getting ready for Christmas when the time comes? Why are we always ready to practice Christmas songs, and to learn our Christmas recitations? Have you ever thought of why you always like these things? Maybe you would simply answer that it is because you just do enjoy them, and that you like to do them because they bring you joy and happiness. For we always love to do the things that give us pleasure.

Where does this pleasure—this joy and happiness — come from? It doesn't just come out of nowhere, like a breath of wind. We all know that joy and happiness are very real things, something we feel, and so we know that they exist. And if we think a moment, we will remember that all joy and happiness come from heaven. They come from the presence and nearness of the angels. For this is true of Christmas joy as well as of any other joy or happiness which we may have or feel.

In the years before the Lord was born there wasn't much joy and happiness on earth. Instead there was much evil, and many wars in which people were killed, and suffered a great deal. Very few people knew about the Lord, and fewer still believed in Him. And those few who did know, and did believe, were filled with sorrow, because they longed for the Lord to come on earth, as through His prophets He had promised He would. Some began to lose hope that He ever would come. So you see, there wasn't much happiness on earth in those days just before the Lord was born.

But there was a place where there was great rapture and rejoicing, and this was in heaven. The angels, especially the wisest of them, knew that the Lord was about to come on earth. They knew that He was preparing to "bow the heavens and come down." Therefore they were exceedingly happy; for they knew that He would be able to save all people, and make them happy like the angels. They knew that He would bring "peace on earth, and good will to men." They knew that those who had waited so long, and believed in the Lord's Coming, were soon to be rewarded.

Angels, like people, when they have good news, like to tell it to others, so that they can share their happiness. So it was that the Lord allowed some of the angels to appear to some men and tell them that He was about to be born. In

that way men would know who He was when He came and be prepared to greet Him.

But the angels could only appear to those who loved and believed in the Lord—those who still hoped and looked for His Coming. One of these was Mary, and so the Angel Gabriel came to her and told her that she had been chosen to be the mother of a Son who should inherit the throne of His father, David. He told her that she was to be the mother of the Lord Himself because He was going to be born as a little child. But Mary wondered how this could possibly happen. Then the angel told her that “the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God”(Luke 1:35).

Mary did not doubt the angel. She believed, and believing, she was filled with great joy and happiness. And then, like the angels, she wanted to tell the glad tidings to others. She could not keep the good news to herself. She felt that she must seek out her cousin Elizabeth and share her newfound happiness with her. And we can well imagine the intense rapture, the great joy, with which she uttered that song beginning with the words, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior”. Elizabeth, too, was filled with joy and happiness, and said to Mary, “Blessed are you among women” (Luke 1:42,46,47).

Not only did the angels appear to Mary, but in the Word we are told how they appeared also to Joseph, to Elizabeth, and to Zacharias; also how they appeared to the shepherds in the field, and even to the wise men far away—for the star which they saw was a society of the heavenly angels telling them where to go. And so the joy of the angels overflowed into the world, and reached those who would be happy because the Lord was coming.

And it is the same with us today, whenever we celebrate the Lord’s birth. When we read that story about Him in the Word, when we sing the Christmas songs, and thus prepare for and celebrate Christmas, the angels are again filled with joy and happiness, and if we love and believe these things, they can draw near to us, and fill us with joy, as they did Mary and Elizabeth and the shepherds. We may not actually see them, as did Mary and the shepherds, but we can feel them near us; for the joy and happiness we feel is from their presence—their nearness to us. They feel that their joy comes right from the Lord, and they pass it on to us, and thus the Lord fills us all with peace and happiness.

When we know these things about the wonder of the Lord’s Coming on earth to save all people, and the great joy of the angels because of His Coming, we too are moved to sing with the heavenly host that appeared to the shepherds, and praise God, saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). *Amen.*