

SESSION 1: HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

John 1:11-12, Revelation 21:4, John 14:3

QUESTIONS

1. What is something that has reawakened your faith in the past?
2. What helps you to renew your joy in Christ? A certain song/hymn? A Bible verse? Something else?
3. Spend time reading through each verse together. Discuss the bolded phrases. What do they mean, or what are you proclaiming when you sing this phrase? What biblical references do you infer or recall as you read the verses? Which phrase speaks to your present situation?
4. Read John 1:1-14 together. How do the lyrics of the hymn reflect Scripture?
 - Discuss the wonder of Jesus' condescension (coming to earth as true God, true man). How do the lyrics and verses highlight different aspects of His coming to earth?
 - How do they lyrics direct us in what response we should have to Christ's birth? How should we be changed?
5. Read Romans 5:12-17 in your Bible (or read the NLT translation below for simplified wording).
 - What do you understand these verses to mean?
 - How do they reflect the lyrics, *Adam's likeness Lord efface, stamp Thine image in its place. Second Adam from above, reinstate us in Thy love?* How are we changed, stamped or reinstated?
 - Look back in Genesis – how was Jesus Christ, the second Adam, foretold even then?

[illegible]

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Hark! The Herald Angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise.
Join the triumph of the skies.
With th' Angelic Hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King."*

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord
Late in time behold Him come,
Off-spring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail, the incarnate deity
Pleased as Man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King."*

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace,
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His Wings.
Now He lays His Glory by,
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King."*

Come, Desire of nations come,
Fix in us Thy humble home;
Oh, to all Thyself impart,
Formed in each believing heart!
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King."*

Adam's likeness, Lord, efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place:
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in Thy love.
Let us Thee, though lost, regain,
Thee, the Life, the inner man:
O, to all Thyself impart,
Formed in each believing heart.
*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King."*

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

Romans 5:12-17

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 1: HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men (Luke 2:14). These were the words of the angels as they shared the news of Jesus' birth. This is the same sentiment that starts the hymn, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

In the time of Advent, we anticipate and await Christmas, the celebration of Jesus' presence on earth. In hymns like, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," we echo the pleas of God's people calling out to Him for the Savior. And in hymns such as, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," we are gently told the story of Jesus' birth. But as the shepherds and the surrounding people heard from the angels, and as we know it to be true today, Jesus is here! He has come, and He is with us! This is the truth that is taught to us in, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

Charles Wesley wrote the words to this carol, which first appeared in text in 1739, altered in 1753 to the words we know today. "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" and the many other hymns that Wesley wrote might not exist if not for an experience he had when he was 31 years old.

Charles grew up in a religious household – his father was an Anglican clergyman and his mother made sure all her children received spiritual teaching. In university, Charles formed a club with his friends to help them stay devoted to Christ and live out spiritual disciplines. He and his brother both even went on a missionary trip to America. This trip was not successful, and their return to England brought with it doubts about their faith and ministry. However, on Pentecost Sunday in 1738, Charles felt a change. He felt the Spirit of God move in him, and wrote in his journal, that the Spirit had "chased away the darkness of my unbelief" ("1738 John & Charles Wesley Experience Conversions" – Christian History Institute). This man grew up with faith in God, was a preacher, taught the Word of God, wrote hymns, and was a missionary. Yet it was only later in his life, after he experienced failure and doubt, that he finally felt the presence of God.

What a moment that must have been! To feel like you see and understand God, only to realize that you have been living with a veil over your eyes, that God is indeed much bigger, much greater, more present, than you ever imagined.

Have you ever experienced such a reawakening? Or do you feel as if your faith has been at a sort of standstill? Maybe this Christmas season is the time to dive deeper into who God is and what He means to your life. Let Charles Wesley's lyrics in "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" help you to renew your faith.

These words come from a man who experienced a complete change, and they may just help you to facilitate a change as you allow God to work in your heart.

The words of this carol not only share biblical truths for all people, but also express the joy that comes from believing in these truths.

In the first verse, we sing of the angels' visit to the shepherds, proclaiming the birth of Jesus. In the coming of Jesus, man has the opportunity to be reconciled with God. Knowing that we, as sinners, can be with God, should cause us to rise in joy and praise Him.

In the second and third verses, we sing about the virgin birth. Even though Christ was adored in heaven and Lord over all, He gladly came to earth to be with us to do His Father's will. And as true Man and God, we find new life in Jesus Christ. When we are aware of what Jesus has done for us and still is doing for us, we hail Him, as the song urges us to do – we declare in song, in word, in deed, in any way we can, how good He is.

These first few verses are about Jesus and what He was done, but the fourth and fifth verses are about our response. When you reflect on Jesus' role in your life, what is your response? What action are you spurred to? Out of thanksgiving and our love for Him, we desire to live like Him. We ask God, humbly, to help us as we strive to become who He wants us to be. We ask Him to move in our hearts. We ask Him to be with us and make His presence known to all believers. And as we reflect His light and align ourselves to His ways, all the while we proclaim the glory of Christ, as the angels did when He first came to earth as a baby.