



December 29, 2025

Since it's only a few days past the 25th, and still the month of December, I have a few final thoughts before the arrival of 2026. One of our long-standing family traditions for the Christmas season is to attend a performance of the Messiah somewhere. Locations and dates have varied over the years, but we try to find a venue that allows all of us to meet and enjoy the event together. It's always an uplifting afternoon or evening to share and talk about. Several of the more memorable performances we've experienced were held at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles when we still lived in California. Let me explain why.

There was the usual hubbub of locating seats as the entire auditorium steadily fills to capacity. At the appointed time, the orchestra, conductor, and soloists appeared on stage to take their places, while a large choral ensemble filed in behind them. The audience began to quiet as everyone settled into position. Anticipation was high; the program was about to start. But first, the maestro turned to the audience, and with a grin and wave of his baton he directed the crowd to stand. The difference between this concert and some others, is the attendees are also part of the performance. Ticket holders were encouraged to arrive with their own copies of the oratorio.

To prepare vocal chords for what was coming, the "warm up" was an initial run-through of the Hallelujah Chorus. By the end of the evening, along with the other choral movements, we had sung it three times; once more during the performance, and again as the "farewell" before leaving the building. Words fail to adequately describe the soaring spiritual experience of being surrounded by and part of thousands of voices singing in full voice the majestic words of praise to our heavenly Maker. It's awe inspiring,, and something one does not soon forget.

As uplifting as that event was, it doesn't begin to compare to the heavenly choir that appeared and sang to the unsuspecting shepherds on the quiet

hillside the night Jesus was born. It's not a small thing when one or more angels pay a visit. They are messengers sent directly from the throne of God who bring with them the shimmering glory of that place. Descriptions of their actual appearance differ, but it's clear they are not of *this* world. It's no wonder the startled men were deeply afraid.

The angel of the Lord who appeared first isn't named, although it's conjectured to be Gabriel, who was most often sent to make an important pronouncement. This surely was such a time. The quaking shepherds were to take heart. Hundreds of years of prophecy were fulfilled. "Fear not, I bring you good news of great joy...". The long-awaited Light of the world, bringing hope and redemption for all creation, had been born in nearby Bethlehem. Then, a "multitude" of angels joined in celebration. The dark night sky was lit to brilliance with the radiance of heaven, and ringing with the voices of angels singing. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to all on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:14. What a sight! What a sound!

When the angels were gone just as suddenly, all was as usual again, except it wasn't. The birth of Jesus was like no other historical event before or since. It was life-altering. The shepherds were irrevocably touched and changed when they made their way to the manger to see for themselves. It was all true. The experience was too much to keep secret. They had to tell their remarkable story. Luke 2:20 records that they returned, "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen..."

It's my earnest prayer that everyone who came to observe the manger this past Christmas season will also believe that the baby of Bethlehem truly is the promised Savior of the lost, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Like the amazed shepherds, may our heartfelt praises continue to be heard throughout the coming new year.

The angels are still singing. They make joyful noise. We're told it's what they do without ceasing. Revelations 5 describes the scene as thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand encircling the throne singing in loud voices. "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever!" Someday, the trumpet will sound, and all believers will be part of *that* choir.

~Written by Char Kamper

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