

# Hark the Herald Angels Sing

"Hark! How all the Welkin Rings," poem by Charles Wesley and George Whitefield in the late-1700s, music by Felix Mendelssohn through Dr. William Cummings in 1855

*E B E B<sup>7</sup>*

Hark the herald angels sing,

*E A E B<sup>7</sup> E*

Glory to the newborn King.

*E B E F<sup>#7</sup>*

Peace on earth and mercy mild,

*G<sup>#m</sup> F<sup>#</sup> B F<sup>#7</sup> B<sup>7</sup>*

God and sinners reconciled.

*E B<sup>7</sup> E B*

Joyful all ye nations rise,

*E B<sup>7</sup> E B*

Join the triumph of the skies.

*A (in the 5th fret) C<sup>#</sup> F<sup>#m</sup>*

With angelic hosts proclaim,

*B<sup>7</sup> E B E*

Christ is born in Bethle-hem.

*A (in the 5th fret) C<sup>#</sup> F<sup>#m</sup>*

Hark the herald angels sing,

*B<sup>7</sup> E B E*

Glory to the newborn King.

*E B E B<sup>7</sup>*  
Christ by highest heaven adored,

*E A E B E*

Christ the everlasting Lord.

*E B E F<sup>#7</sup>*

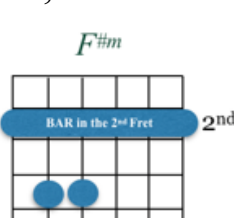
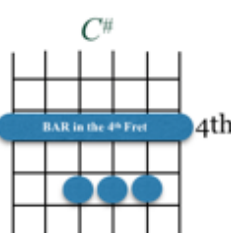
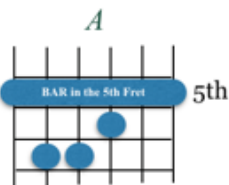
Late in time be-hold Him come.

*G<sup>#m</sup> F<sup>#</sup> B F<sup>#7</sup> B<sup>7</sup>*

Off-spring of the virgin's womb.

*E B<sup>7</sup> E B*

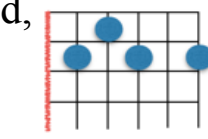
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;



*B*



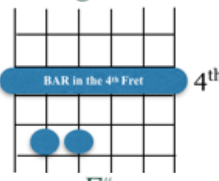
*B<sup>7</sup>*



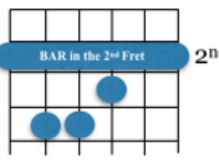
*F<sup>#7</sup>*



*G<sup>#m</sup>*



*F<sup>#</sup>*



*E B<sup>7</sup> E B*

Hail the incarnate de - it - y.

*A (in the 5th fret)*

*C<sup>#</sup> F<sup>#m</sup>*

Pleased as man with man to dwell,

*B<sup>7</sup> E B E*

Jesus our Immanu-el!

*A (in the 5th fret)*

*C<sup>#</sup> F<sup>#m</sup>*

Hark the herald angels sing,

*B<sup>7</sup> E B E*

Glory to the newborn King.

*E B E B<sup>7</sup>*

Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace!

*E A E B<sup>7</sup> E*

Hail the Son of Righteousness!

*E B E F<sup>#7</sup>*

Light and life to all He brings,

*G<sup>#m</sup> F<sup>#</sup> B F<sup>#7</sup> B<sup>7</sup>*

Risen with healing in His wings.

*E B<sup>7</sup> E B*

Mild He lays His glo-ry by,

*E B<sup>7</sup> E B*

Born that man no more may die,

*A (in the 5th fret)*

*C<sup>#</sup> F<sup>#m</sup>*

Born to raise the sons of earth.

*B<sup>7</sup> E B E*

Born to give them second birth.

*A (in the 5th fret)*

*C<sup>#</sup> F<sup>#m</sup>*

Hark the herald angels sing,

*B<sup>7</sup> E B E*

Glory to the newborn King.

*Christmas as you go*

# Scripture and History

**Luke 2:8-14** Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

“**Hark! How all the Welkin Rings**” was the original title and the first line of Charles Wesley’s carol. Welkin means “the vault of heaven makes a long noise”. Thus, when heaven sends forth a loud pronouncement, the entire power of the King is revealed.

An old college friend and colleague, George Whitefield, substituted the familiar opening line over the protests of the author. Wesley correctly stated that nowhere in the Bible is it specifically recorded that angels sang about the birth of the Christ. It may be due to Whitefield’s changes that people today read **Luke 2:23**, “A great company of the heavenly host (spiritual beings) appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests’” and visualize angels singing. The angels may have sung, but scripture doesn’t record it.

The music we sing today is from the second chorus of a cantata by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) written in 1840 to commemorate Johann Gutenberg and the invention of printing. Mendelssohn was raised as a Jew, but converted to Christianity.



*Seeing Shepherds* is a painting by Daniel Bonnell  
 Mr Bonnell’s painting is available at [fineartamerica.com](http://fineartamerica.com)

In 1855, after both Wesley and Mendelssohn were dead, Dr. William Cummings put the words and music together in spite of evidence that neither author nor composer would have approved.

Mendelssohn had made it clear that his music was for secular use, and Wesley had specifically requested slow solemn music for his words. The end result, “**Hark, the Herald Angels Sing**” was a dramatic change unimagined by either composer.

from “*Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas*” by Andrew (Ace) Collins, 2001.



Charles Wesley  
 Image from  
 Wikipedia



George Whitefield  
 Image from  
 Wikipedia



Felix Mendelssohn  
 Image from  
[google.com](http://google.com)



Dr William Cummings  
 Image from Wikipedia