

Do Angels Really Sing?

Read Time: 4 Minutes 29 Seconds

Of all the special ornaments and accouterments of this Christmas season, angels and the star of Bethlehem are among the favorites. They are often represented in our homes, our church pageants and even store windows around the world!

Drawn from the Christmas story in Scriptures, we feature angels atop our trees and lighted representations of them in our front yards. The earliest books in our holy Scriptures describe their creation and the last book of the Bible is filled with their actions in heaven and on earth as they carry out God's work.

Can we see angels?

Angels are a special category of created, heavenly beings who are superior to mankind in power and intelligence, but they are not all powerful or all-knowing (Ps. 103:20; 2 Thess. 1:7). They follow God's specific direction, as they serve Him as messengers, protectors and witnesses.

As created spirit-beings (Ps. 148:1-6; Hebrews 1:14), they do not have an essential physical form. However, we know that angels have the ability to appear in anthropomorphic, human form and when angels appeared in the Bible to humans, they represented normal males.

In Genesis 18:1-19, God and two angels appeared as men and even ate a meal with Abraham. Later in Scripture, when Joshua prepared to attack the fortified city of Jericho, a "man" with a drawn sword stood before him. In Joshua 5:14, he identified himself as the "commander of the armies of the Lord," a warrior angel appearing as a man.

On other occasions in the Bible, we read that angels'

appearances could be terrifying to humans. That's why the first words from these angels to humans were often "Do not be afraid"—because a common reaction to angel sightings was extreme fear. This is shown in the events of the Incarnation, for example when the angel Gabriel announced John's birth to Zacharias (Luke 1:11-20) and when the angel Gabriel announced Jesus' birth to Mary (Luke 1:26-38).

Matthew's Gospel twice tells of "an angel" appearing to Joseph "in a dream" concerning the birth and protection of the Christ-child (Matt. 1:18-25 and 2:13-15). While the angel in the dreams is not described, Joseph obeyed what the angel directed.

You may also recall the reaction of the shepherds in the fields around Bethlehem, in Luke 2. They were "greatly afraid" when the angel of the Lord appeared to them and the "doxa" or majestic-like glory of the Lord was observed all around them.

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These angels, working the "night shift" above the fields of Bethlehem on the night the Christ-child was born, apparently did not actually sing. The Scripture only says, "Suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth praise among men with whom He is pleased'" (Luke 2:13). Was this more of a holy chant they spoke than a song they sang?

In Isaiah's vision of God's throne room, the angels called Seraphim seem to be the praise-leaders in heaven. They cried out repeatedly to one another "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" They seemed to chant this continuously, filling Heaven with their voices, extolling God's greatness and authority (Isa. 6:1-3).

There is one Old Testament passage which may indicate angels singing—at creation! Job 38:7 speaks of the "morning stars"

singing together and “all the sons of God shouted for joy.” We are not sure what or who these “morning stars” were, but “the sons of God,” used in this passage, are thought by theologians to be angels. If so, the verse says these pre-existent angels “shouted for joy.”

Worship Christ, the Newborn King

Whether angels sing, chant or shout, we who are the redeemed of the Lord are instructed to “sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of saints” (Ps. 149:1). The psalmist then calls for us to use all manner of instruments with our praise. He lists trumpets, lutes, harps, timbrel, stringed instruments and flutes and even loud, crashing cymbals (vv. 3-5). Then, he grandly calls for “everything that has breath” to “praise the Lord” (v. 6)!

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul introduces us to spiritual gifts being used in the congregations to edify, exhort and comfort the saints. He concludes his teaching about these gifts by explaining his own practice and preferences concerning the gift of tongues within the church: “What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit and I will also pray with understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with understanding,” (1 Cor. 14:15).

Paul taught believers in the congregations in Ephesus and Colossae to be continually “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18-19) and the “word of Christ” (Col. 3:16) by “singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” Dr. Jack Hayford explains that “psalms are scriptural lyrics in song; hymns are humanly inspired lyrics in song; [while] spiritual songs are impromptu rhythmic lyrics given by the Holy Spirit in one’s language or in ‘tongues’ (see 1 Cor. 14:15).”

This reference is in Paul’s extensive instruction to the Corinthians believers about the vocal gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12-14. He explained in chapter 14 that we

can worship God in an unlearned language or “utterance” prompted by the spirit of God within us. He also taught the value of encouraging, edifying and comforting fellow believers by way of singing and praising God with learned and recognized words and languages—and perhaps even varied styles of song.

At this Christmas season—in particular—let us believers sing and play our songs of praise and celebration in worship of Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior and the Jewish Messiah! Let the lyrics of every carol of Advent we can find be used with melodies of praise to worship the “newborn King!”

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