



Around the Word
Bible Study
Epiphany, 2016

Hymn Study

O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright (Stanza 5)

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
—John 1:5

[O Morning Star is] a spiritual bridal song of the believing soul concerning Jesus Christ, her heavenly Bridegroom, founded on the 45th Psalm of the prophet David.
—Philipp Nicolai

One morning Nicolai was in great distress and tribulation in his quiet study. He rose in spirit from the distress and death which surrounded him to his Redeemer and Saviour, and while he clasped Him in ardent love there welled forth from the inmost depths of his heart this precious hymn of the Saviour's love and of the joys of Heaven. He was so entirely absorbed in this holy exaltation that he forgot all around him, even his midday meal, and allowed nothing to disturb him in his poetical labours till the hymn was completed.
—Richard Lauxmann, on the composition of "O Morning Star"

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Opening: "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright" (Stanza 5)

O let the harps break forth in sound!
Our joy be all with music crowned,
Our voices gladly blending!
For Christ goes with us all the way—
Today, tomorrow, ev'ry day!
His love is never ending!
Sing out! Ring out!
Jubilation!
Exultation!
Tell the story!
Great is He, the King of Glory!

Compare stanza 5 of "O Morning Star" with Psalm 45, which was the basis for this hymn. Where do you see elements of psalm 45 in this stanza?

"Our joy be all with music crowned"

See Psalm 33:1–5. Who, specifically, is instructed to "shout for joy in the Lord" in this psalm?

What, according to Romans 5:19, does it mean to be declared righteous, and how does this testimony affect the heart? See Psalm 119:111.

Why are the righteous encouraged to sing, according to Psalm 33:1b, 4? Who is the royal priesthood, and what sacrifice do they offer, according to 1 Peter 2:9? What impact does being washed in the blood of Christ have on the tongue? See Psalm 51:14.

Continuing along in Psalm 33 (v. 6–22), which of God's works does the psalmist have in mind while praising God? See v. 6–7, 9; 10; 18–22? What contrast does the psalmist draw between v. 13–15, 18–22 and v. 16–17? How is this affirmed in Psalm 146?

How does Micah describe the reliability of even those closest to us? See Micah 7:5–6. What is his response? See Micah 7:7.

Notice the mention of a "new song" in Psalm 33:3 and compare Revelation 14:3–5. Who is singing this "new song" in Revelation 14?

If those who sing the new song are those who "had been redeemed...who follow the Lamb wherever He goes," is the "new song" biblical evidence for the legitimacy of so-called "praise" songs that emphasize our feelings about God, or is it describing a more doctrinal type of singing which emphasizes the proclamation of God's saving work in Christ Jesus? See 2 Corinthians 4:5.

Based on 2 Timothy 1:13, what better teaches the faith? Novel songs and liturgies that are constantly changing, or liturgies that are fixed and repetitive?

What is the same (old) message the Church is constantly proclaiming? See 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. In what sense is this proclamation "new"? See Luke 22:20 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

"Our voices gladly blending"

In this stanza, Nicolai urges us to use all the resources we have at our disposal in the praise of God. This includes both music (harps and voices) and the company of fellow believers ('our voices gladly blending.')

What is one of the most important tasks God has given to His creation? See Psalm 19:1. How is the creation portrayed in 1 Chronicles 16:32–33?

If this is true of the physical creation, this should go double for the Church. How does St. Paul describe the Church (the communion of saints) in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27? What functions do we see this Body exercising in Acts 2:42–47? Compare what Acts 2:46–47 and Psalm 149:1 say with stanza 5's "our voices gladly blending."

See Psalm 150:1 and 1 Chronicles 16:31. How do these verses encourage the broadest possible understanding of the communion of saints, or those whose voices blend together? Compare also Amos 9:5–6 and Hebrews 12:22.

How does the angels' Gloria in Excelsis (Luke 1:14) and the heavenly Sanctus of the seraphim (Isaiah 6:3) affirm the unity between the Church in heaven and the Church on earth?

"For Christ goes with us all the way"

What assurance does Christ give His Church in Matthew 28:20? How is this also affirmed in Matthew 18:20? Notice also how Christ ties the promise of His presence here in Matthew 18:20 to the gathering together of His Church.

What attendance requirements must a congregation meet in order to have a legitimate service, according to Matthew 18:20? What do we usually fail to consider when we keep track of attendance, in light of the above passages (Psalm 150:1; 1 Chronicles 16:31; Luke 1:14; Isaiah 6:3), along with Hebrews 12:22?

How does the Lord describe the size of His Church in Isaiah 10:19–22 and Matthew 7:13–14?

For what purpose does Christ go with us? See Psalm 25:5. Why is this necessary? See Isaiah 42:16. What promise does God make in Psalm 68:19?

"Sing out! Ring out! Jubilation! Exultation!"

See Psalm 57. What is the context for David's praise? See verse 4; compare Acts 16:23–25 and Psalm 27:6.

In light of this, what impact should our circumstances

have on when we praise God? Compare Philippians 4:4, 11–13. See also Psalm 92:1–2; 34:1.

Why, in Psalm 18:46–49, does David praise the Name of the Lord?

You might expect David to attribute the ending of the night to the rising of the sun, but what does he say will awaken the dawn in Psalm 57:7–8? How does this agree with Genesis 1:3 and 16 (notice when God created light versus the sun), Psalm 119:105, and Revelation 22:5? What do these verses teach us about the relationship between God and the working of His physical creation? What is it that makes creation work? See Psalm 33:6.

How does this correspond to the relationship between water and God's Word in Holy Baptism? See the following quote from Luther's *Small Catechism*:

"How can water do such great things? It is not the water indeed that does them, but the Word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water. For without the Word of God the water is simple water and no baptism. But with the Word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says in Titus [3:5–8]."

Compare also what Luther says about the Sacrament of the Altar in the *Large Catechism*: "It is the Word (I say) which makes and distinguishes this Sacrament, so that it is not mere bread and wine, but is, and is called, the body and blood of Christ," (10).

Before whom does David intend to sing? See Psalm 57:9. How is this similar to the Song of Moses in Exodus 15? What purpose does God's triumph over Pharaoh/Satan serve? See Revelation 15:3–4; Isaiah 2:2–4. What do the fates of Pharaoh and the devil have in common? See Exodus 15:4 and Revelation 20:10.

What impact does Habakkuk's recollection of God's works have on the prophet? See Habakkuk 3.

"Tell the story"

What has God done with His righteousness, according to Psalm 98:2? Where does and doesn't this righteousness come from? See Philippians 3:9.

What promise does God make about His righteousness in 2 Peter 3:13? In the meantime, how do we receive training in righteousness? See 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Ephesians 4:11–13. Why does God grant us salvation? See Psalm 79:9.

Closing: Psalm 45

¹My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;
I address my verses | to the king;*
my tongue is like the pen of a | ready scribe.

²**You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured up- | on your lips;* therefore God has blessed you for- | ever.**

³Gird your sword on your thigh, O | mighty one,*
in your splendor and | majesty!

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⁴**In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and | righteous- ness;***

let your right hand teach you | awesome deeds!

⁵Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's | enemies;*
the peoples fall | under you.

⁶**Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.**

**The scepter of your kingdom is
a scepter of up- | rightness;***

⁷**You have loved righteousness
and hated | wickedness.**

Therefore God, your God,
has anointed you with the oil of
gladness beyond your com- |
panions;*

⁸your robes are all fragrant with
myrrh and aloes and | cassia.

**From ivory palaces stringed instruments |
make you glad;***

⁹**daughters of kings are among
your ladies of honor;
at your right hand stands the
queen in gold of | Ophir.**

¹⁰Hear, O daughter, and consider, and
in | cline your ear:*

forget your people and your |
father's house,

¹¹**and the king will desire your |
beauty.***

**Since he is your lord, | bow to
him.**

¹²The people of Tyre will seek your
fa- | vor with gifts,*
the richest of the | people.

¹³**All glorious is the princess in her
chamber, with robes interwoven |
with gold.***

¹⁴**In many-colored robes
she is led to the king,
with her virgin companions
following be- | hind her.**

¹⁵With joy and gladness they are | led
along*
as they enter the palace | of the king.

¹⁶**In place of your fathers shall | be your
sons;***

**you will make them princes in | all the
earth.**

¹⁷I will cause your name to be remembered in all gener- | ations;*
therefore nations will praise you
forever and | ever.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**



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