

## Week 5: Charles Wesley

# Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies

Text: Charles Wesley (1707–1788), 1740

- While studying at Oxford for ordination in the Church of England, formed a “Holy Club” for prayer and bible study that John Wesley and George Whitefield later joined
- After ordination, sailed for America as missionaries, but were ill-received and left for Britain again less than a year later
- In 1738, both Wesley brothers had a conversion experience, and John later wrote he felt his heart “strangely warmed”
- In what was uncommon practice at the time, they began preaching outdoors, and without prepared sermons
- As Charles wrote at the time:

Seeing so few present ... I thought of preaching extempore: afraid; yet ventured on the promise, “Lo, I am with you always”; and spake ... for three quarters of an hour without hesitation. Glory be to God...

- This text was published two years later in their collection *Hymns and Sacred Poems*
- James Montgomery, author of “Hail To The Lord’s Anointed” (among others), said this hymn is “one of Charles Wesley’s loveliest progeny”

Tune: Johann Gottlob Werner (1777–1822), 1815

- Organist for a succession of churches in Germany, including Freiburg Cathedral and Merseburg Cathedral, where he was also music director
  - Not to be confused with an earlier Johann Gottlob Werner (1719–1781), a German theologian
  - This tune was originally a German folk tune, published in his *Choralbuch* collection
  - The name RATISBON is an old English name for the German city of Regensburg
  - Harmonized by William Henry Havergal in 1847 for *Hymns Ancient and Modern*
1. This text is somewhat unique in that it is so focused on a single metaphor, the idea of light. What are some of the different ideas that Wesley communicates using the metaphor of light (and dark)? How do they fit together in the overall message of the hymn?
    - a. Originally titled as a “Morning Hymn”, with connections to dawn & morning light
      - i. Interestingly, is missing some typical features of morning hymns (e.g. mention of previous day’s rest, dangers/work of the day ahead)
    - b. Obvious reference is to John 8:12 (“I am the light of the world”)
      - i. Here means Christ is the conqueror of darkness (sin, despair) and bringer of life everlasting
    - c. “Sun of Righteousness” is a phrase from Malachi 4:2, talking about the coming day of judgment
      - i. May remind of part in another Wesley hymn, “Hark The Herald”, that quotes the full verse:

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
    - d. “Dayspring” literally means “sunrise”, referring to the dawning of the morning light
      - i. From Zacharias’s prophecy of Jesus after the birth of John the Baptist in Luke 1:78
      - ii. In context, refers to the first coming (advent) of Jesus
    - e. “Daystar” is the last star to appear in the east before the sun rises
      - i. Comes from 2 Peter 1:19, talking spiritual “illumination”, bringing insight and guidance
      - ii. Could also quote from Revelation 22:16, where Jesus identifies himself as the “morning star” to the seven churches
      - iii. In context, refers to the coming of Jesus in your life, and potentially thesecond coming (advent) of Jesus

# O for a Heart to Praise My God

Text: Charles Wesley (1707–1788), 1742

- Originally published with eight stanzas, along with a quote from Psalm 51:10, “Make me a Clean Heart, O GOD, and renew a right Spirit within me”
- A later hymnal compiled by John in 1780 (organized by topic) included this hymn in a section “For Believers Groaning for Full Redemption”

Tune: Thomas Haweis (1734–1820), 1792

- First apprenticed as an apothecary and physician, later became a minister in the Church of England
- After meeting Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, served in many of the chapels she oversaw
- Invited to America by George Whitefield, but decided to remain in England
- First published this tune in 1792, was later shortened and modified by Samuel Webbe Jr. in 1808
- Webbe named the tune RICHMOND, in honor of Leigh Richmond, a minister and friend of Haweis
- Occasionally also appears as CHESTERFIELD, named after one Lord Chesterfield, a frequent visitor of Hastings

1. This text has a lot of different descriptions of what a “renewed” heart looks like. Which stand out to you as the most important, and why? How should having a “copy” of God’s heart change the way you live?
  - a. “Heart to praise” and “always feels thy blood” go together - praise is the response to God’s grace
  - b. “Only Christ is heard to speak” is phrased from an outside perspective - when others hear us speak, they should only hear Jesus
    - i. Thus, a renewed spirit is not just an internal process; there should be clear outward effects
  - c. Verse 3 has an odd grouping of adjectives
    - i. “Believing”, “true”, “humble”, “contrite” seem like things we can choose for ourselves
    - ii. “Clean”, on the other hand, seems like something only God can create in us
  - d. Having a “copy” of God’s heart means loving like He does: unconditionally and for everyone, grieved by sin and injustice, etc.
    - i. Interesting parallel with being “made in God’s image”
2. The final words “thy new, best name of Love” recalls another text of Wesley’s, “Come O Thou Traveler Unknown” (titled “Wrestling Jacob”, also written in 1742). Read the poem aloud as a class. Do you see other parallels between the two?
  - a. The title “Wrestling Jacob” comes from Genesis 32:24-32
  - b. John recorded that Isaac Watts once said that this one poem “was worth all the verses he himself had written”
  - c. The tenacity shown by the narrator seems to embody a “believing, true” heart
  - d. “When I am weak, then I am strong” - like asking for strength through a “lowly, contrite” heart
  - e. “The morning breaks, the shadows flee” and “Sun of Righteousness” - sounds like “Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies”

# Rejoice, the Lord is King

Text: Charles Wesley (1707–1788), 1744

- First published in *Moral and Sacred Poems* in 1744, then *Hymns for our Lord's Resurrection* in 1746
- Around this time, the Wesleys were drawing big crowds but also significant opposition
- In one instance in 1743, Charles wrote:

I had just named my text at St. Ives ... when an army of rebels broke in upon us ... They broke the sconces, dashed the windows in pieces, tore away the shutters ... beat and dragged the women about, particularly one of a great age, and trampled on them without mercy. The longer they stayed, and the more they raged, the more power I found from above.

- Three years later, after visiting the same location again he wrote:

At St. Ives no one offered to make the least disturbance. Indeed, the whole place is outwardly changed in this respect. I walk the streets with astonishment, scarce believing it St. Ives. It is the same throughout all the county. All opposition falls before us...

Tune: John Darwall (1731–1789), 1770

- A lifelong Anglican minister, and amateur musician, served at St. Matthew's Parish in Walsall for the entirety of his 33-year career
- Having been widowed with five (possibly six) children, remarried in 1766 and had a further six children
- His second wife, Mary Whateley, was already a published poet; together they ran a printing press and wrote hymns for the Walsall congregation
- Composed soprano and bass lines for each of the 150 psalm texts in Tate and Brady's 1696 psalter *New Version of the Psalms of David*
- This tune, DARWALL'S 148TH (written for a version of Psalm 148 in Aaron Williams' *New Universal Psalmodist* of 1770), is his only one still in regular use

1. This hymn is a wonderful blend of victorious imagery from both Christ's resurrection and his second coming. As Christians, how should this knowledge of God's ultimate victory affect the way we live?
  - a. The theme of praise/rejoicing appears in both the first and last verses (as well as the refrain), serving as a bookend for the hymn
    - i. This is a very Psalm-like structure, see Psalm 97
  - b. This knowledge can be held by all Christians; parallels the Apostles' Creed, "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead"
  - c. We need not live in fear or worry because "His kingdom cannot fail"
  - d. We can look forward in hope to living in heaven with Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:52, "for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed")
  - e. The refrain is a quote of Philippians 4:4, and the implication is straightforward: offer your hearts to God, offer your voice in praise, and live joyfully
2. Though it occasionally appears with other tunes, Darwall's is an overwhelming favorite for use with this hymn. What feature can you see in the music that make it such a good fit?
  - a. Arpeggiated beginning of the melody gives it a triumphant, fanfare-like feel
  - b. Rising scale for the refrain at the end of each verse has a dramatic effect, with a built-in crescendo