

# SING A NEW SONG

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According to the Bible, what is a “new song”? It’s a song never heard before (and maybe never again!). It is prompted by the Holy Spirit. It is an expression of thanks and praise, and may even bring prophetic revelation.

When do you sing a new song? Whenever the Spirit moves you!

The birth of Jesus of Nazareth was surrounded by singing like this (known to the Eastern Church as the Nativity Hymns).

## **Elizabeth’s Ave Maria**

*Ave Maria* means “Hail, Mary” in Latin and comes from the first words of the angel who announced Mary’s pregnancy. The Eastern Church formulated a prayer for Mary’s intercession, which includes both the angel’s words and Elizabeth’s benediction and others, added by the church.

When Mary learned that she was to give birth to the Messiah and that her cousin, Elizabeth, was already pregnant with His forerunner, she went to visit her older cousin. When she arrived, the infant in Elizabeth’s womb leaped and she was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth exclaimed, *“You are more blessed than all women! And blessed is the child you will bear!”* (Luke 1:42)

Elizabeth concluded by explaining the reason for such joyous promise: *“You are so blessed for believing that what the Lord told you will really happen!”*

When Mary heard from the angel what was to happen to her — astonishing as the news was — she said, *“I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.”* (Luke 1:38) She took God at His word, and trusted that He was able to bring even this to pass. And *that* was the key to her blessing.

After His resurrection, Jesus showed Himself alive to Thomas, who exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus said, *“You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me”* (John 20:29). Blessed are those who trust God for what they cannot yet see!

## **Mary’s Magnificat**

Mary responded to Elizabeth’s outburst with a song of her own (Luke 1:47-55).

*“My soul praises the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!*

*For He has considered how humble His servant is.*

*Yes, all future generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me!  
Holy is His name!*

*From generation to generation, His mercy is lavished on those who revere Him.  
He has performed mighty deeds with His arm.*

*He has scattered those whose hearts are proud and brought down rulers from their thrones, but He has lifted up the humble.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things, but sent the rich away empty.*

*He has helped His servant Israel, remembering the mercy He promised to our ancestors—to Abraham and his descendants forever.”*

The title comes from the Latin version of the opening phrase, “Magnify the Lord!” Her song has four parts:

1. Mary’s personal praise.
2. The reason for her praise: God’s amazing mercy.
3. God’s compassion for the inequities of human society: He resists the proud and lifts up the humble.
4. The awaited fulfillment of God’s mercy promised to Israel.

Mary included 17 references from the Old Testament, particularly emphasizing Hannah’s prayer of thanksgiving for her son, Samuel!

Mary knew her Bible. And that is what forms the foundation for a “new song” — familiarity with the Scriptures. That is the source of new song inspiration.

### **Zacharias’ *Benedictus***

Zacharias, the father of John (the baptizer), was reluctant to believe his angelic informant, so he became temporarily mute. It is better to keep your doubts to yourself while you wait to see what God will do. When his miracle son was born, family and friends expected to name him after his father, as was customary. But Elizabeth and Zacharias both said, “His name is John,” as the angel has instructed. At that moment, Zacharias’ voice returned, and he sang a new song (Luke 1:68-79)!

*“May the Lord God of Israel be blessed! He has visited and redeemed His people and has granted us a mighty salvation through the royal line of His servant David—just as He promised long ago through His holy prophets. He will save us from our enemies and from the snares of all who hate us. He will be merciful toward our fathers and will remember His holy covenant, the oath He swore to our father, Abraham. He will rescue us from the hands of our enemies so that we may serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness in His sight for as long as we live.*

*“As for you, little one, you will be called the prophet of the Most High God. You will go before the Lord to clear a path for Him, to give His people the knowledge of salvation in the forgiveness of their sins through the tender mercy of our God. His sunrise has dawned on us from above, shining on those sitting in darkness and in death’s shadow. He will guide our feet in the way of peace.”*

Titled from its opening word in the Latin translation, the *Benedictus* (like Mary’s *Magnificat*) includes echoes from 7 Old Testament books in 17 quotations. However, where Mary’s song emphasized the impact of God’s grace to the individual, Zacharias focused on God’s impact to the Israeli nation.

Zacharias foresaw their deliverance from Roman oppression, but not by military might or genius, but by spiritual emancipation. Israel was not to be delivered to conquer and control other people, but to live together under self-control — serving God in holiness and righteousness.

The second stanza of his song was a prophetic blessing from father to son, recognizing God’s purpose for John to prepare a way for the Messiah, Jesus. When a father sings over his children, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he releases prophetic blessing over their lives.

## Angels' *Gloria In Excelsis Deo*

At the birth of Jesus, outside the town of Bethlehem, shepherds watched over their sheep at night. Suddenly, they were startled by the appearance of an angel, announcing the birth of the Savior. The angel was then joined by a crowd of angels, who sang a new song (Luke 2:14).

*“Glory to God in the highest!  
And on earth, peace to the people  
with whom He is pleased.”*

This is the briefest of the Nativity Hymns, but, no doubt, the loudest, and probably sung as a refrain (over and over again)!

This was wonderful good news to their ears! God was fulfilling His promise of peace and the revelation of His glory to humankind — through the Christ, who was born in their midst that night.

After checking out the news, and finding everything just as the angel had told them, the shepherds began to tell everyone what they had heard and seen. Some new songs bear repeating!

## Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis*

Forty-one days later, Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem's Temple to offer the prescribed redemption price for their first-born son, and to dedicate Him to God.

On that same day, an faithful elder, named Simeon, had been prompted by the Spirit to go to the Temple to witness the answer to his many prayers, for he had been earnestly waiting for the Messiah's appearance. When Simeon saw the child, he knew He was the One. Taking the boy in his arms, he sang a new song (Luke 2:29-32).

*“Now, O Lord, allow Your servant to depart in peace, according to Your promise. For I have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in full view of everyone, a revealing light to the Gentiles and a glory to Your people Israel.”*

## Your New Song

All of these hymns were *spontaneous* and *unrehearsed*. This is the nature of a “new song.” A “new song” is a thoroughly Biblical concept, found repeatedly in the Book of Psalms (Songs) and also in the Book of the Revelation.

Psalm 40

<sup>1</sup> *I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.*

<sup>2</sup> *He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*

<sup>3</sup> **He put a new song in my mouth**, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.

Psalm 98

<sup>1</sup> **Sing to the LORD a new song**, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

Revelation 14

<sup>3</sup> *And **they sang a new song before the throne** and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.*

These are songs that have never been sung before! Many of them will never be sung again.

They are hymns of praise and songs of thanksgiving, inspired and prompted by the Holy Spirit, who lives in the hearts of the redeemed.

They may be sung to music or spoken prosaically. They are heartfelt and spontaneous. They may be lifted in a known or unknown language, to a known or unknown tune.

The Scriptures urge us to sing such songs. Have you ever done so? Just burst out in song to the Lord? In the car? In the shower? On your bed? In the outdoors?

There is a moving example of a well-known song sung in a spontaneous fashion that is circulating these days: "Christmas Food Court Flash Mob, Hallelujah Chorus" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE>). While this is not strictly a "new song" in the Biblical sense, its impact on the hearers is much the same, and it is well worth a look.

Christmastime is just the season to admit more spontaneity into our lives, and to express more spontaneous praise and thanks to God! Sing a new song to the Lord. He is listening.