



I AM Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. ¹⁴ Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.. ¹⁵ For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie. ¹⁶ I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. (Revelation 22:13-16)

The darkness of ignorance and superstition blinded the ages before Christ and smothered the people who sat in that thick darkness of doubt and fear. The first Advent of Christ signaled the end of a 400-year silence from the Throne of Heaven. Malachi pronounced the last word of the Old Testament prophets in 400 B.C., and that word typified the generations who erroneously believed they could be saved by the good works of their hands. The Old Testament Law, which they failed to keep, was a curse and an albatross around their necks. The darkness was intended to all the more contrast the brilliance of the coming Sun of Righteousness whom John the Baptist preached and whose Way he prepared.

This hymn is an old Lutheran hymn composed by Phillip Nicolai who also composed the tune in about 1597-98 and during the sorrowful days of the plague.

How Brightly Shines the Morning Star

How bright appears the Morning Star,
with mercy beaming from afar;
the host of heaven rejoices;
O righteous Branch, O Jesse's Rod!
Thou Son of Man and Son of God!
We, too, will lift our voices:
Jesus, Jesus!
Holy, holy, yet most lowly,
draw thou near us;
great Emmanuel, come and hear us.

Though circled by the hosts on high,
he deigned to cast a pitying eye
upon his helpless creature;
the whole creation's Head and Lord,
by highest seraphim adored,
assumed our very nature;
Jesus, grant us,
through thy merit, to inherit
thy salvation;
hear, O hear our supplication.

Rejoice, ye heavens; thou earth, reply;
with praise, ye sinners, fill the sky,
for this his Incarnation.
Incarnate God, put forth thy power,
ride on, ride on, great Conqueror,
till all know thy salvation.
Amen, amen!
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise be given
evermore, by earth and heaven.

How bright appears the Morning Star, with mercy beaming from afar; the host of heaven rejoices; O righteous Branch, O Jesse's Rod! Thou Son of Man and Son of God! We, too, will lift our voices: Jesus, Jesus! Holy, holy, yet most lowly, draw thou near us; great Emmanuel, come and hear us. There is a particularly bright and wonderful star that illumines the twilight eastern horizon at sunset – it is the Evening Star. It trails across the sky through the long dark night and is viewed as the Morning Star just before the dawning of the Sun. It is the brightest star (planet) in the sky. Its beauty and presence give promise through the dreary night of the coming day. I suppose the Star which the Magi followed to Bethlehem was much like that Morning Star. Both the Star of Bethlehem and the Bright and Morning Star, represent our Lord's coming. Born of a simple young virgin, our Lord came not by way of palaces and temples but was proclaimed by angelic hosts to the poor and humble shepherds on the hills overlooking sleepy little Bethlehem. In its circuit, Venus approaches nearer to earth than other planets just as our Lord is nearest to us among many brethren. He came from the glorious kingdom to inherit the crowns and scepters of all kingdoms.

Though circled by the hosts on high, he deigned to cast a pitying eye upon his helpless creature; the whole creation's Head and Lord, by highest seraphim adored, assumed our very nature; Jesus, grant us, through thy merit, to inherit thy salvation; hear, O hear our supplication. Coming as He did from the glorious Kingdom, leaving behind the close order companionship of His beloved Father, our Lord demonstrated a level of love that to us mortals is incomprehensible by coming among a world of sinners and reprobates, the enemies of the Father, to save us from ourselves – our sins. He was adored by the Father, by the Angelic hosts, by Seraphim and Cherubim, and daily was showered by the praise of Heaven. He left all of that to come among a vulgar and spiteful race – not to condemn, but to redeem. We can in nowise inherit the Kingdom of God by our own merits – only by His IMPUTED righteousness.

Rejoice, ye heavens; thou earth, reply; with praise, ye sinners, fill the sky, for this his Incarnation. Incarnate God, put forth thy power, ride on, ride on, great Conqueror, till all know thy salvation. Amen, amen! Alleluia, alleluia! Praise be given evermore, by

earth and heaven. Indeed did the Heavens rejoice at the incarnation of our Lord. “9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; All of you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a crib. 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. The angels of Heaven are engrossed by the glory and beauty of God and His Creation. Can you imagine the wonder of the poor shepherds at seeing the whole sky filled with glorious angels! Christ is, indeed, the conqueror of every evil enemy. The tender Babe of Bethlehem would become the courageous victor of the Cross and Tomb, but the story does not end there. He shall come again leading the armies of Heaven to bring judgment upon the wicked: “11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word (o. logos) of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should strike the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That all of you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.” Where shall you be standing on that day?