



THY, watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion. 9 ¶ Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. (Isaiah 52:8-9)

IMUST work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:4-5)

WATCH therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25:13)

This is a beautiful Advent hymn calling us forth to prepare our hearts, souls, and minds for the Advent of Christ whose coming forth from eternity past has been God's profound promise of hope to His people. The promise was made to the first man and woman God placed on earth at Eden, renewed to our father Abraham, incarnated at Bethlehem on that first Christmas night, and renewed in the Gospel of our Lord during His earthly ministry. He is ever with us spiritually, yet His physical and victorious coming in power and great might grows in profundity and expectation with each passing moment. The first Advent was hoped and prayed for by the prophets of old and heralded by the Magi. His Second Advent, foretold by the Gospels and other books of the New Testament, will fully consummate that ancient promise made to Adam and Eve after the Fall.

The hymn (both music and lyrics) is by Philip Nicolai in 1599, *WACHET AUF – Wake Up!* and is translated from the German by Catherine Winkworth. The current version adheres to the harmonization of the cantata of the great composer JS Bach.

Philip Nicolai was a German cleric who wrote this great hymn to comfort his people for he had lost 1300 of his own parishioners to the Plague which was raging across Europe. Perhaps it will comfort countless others of our own day who are facing the great viral pestilence from China.

Wake, Awake for Night is Flying

Wake, awake, for night is flying,
The watchmen on the heights are crying,
Awake, Jerusalem, arise!
Midnight's solemn hour is tolling,
His chariot wheels are nearer rolling,
He comes; prepare, ye virgins wise.
Rise up with willing feet
Go forth, the bridegroom meet; alleluia!
Bear through the night your well-trimmed light,
Speed forth to join the marriage rite.

Zion hears the watchmen singing,
Her heart with deep delight is springing,
She wakes, she rises from her gloom;
Forth her bridegroom comes, all-glorious,
In grace arrayed, by truth victorious;
Her star is risen, her light is come!
All hail, incarnate lord,
Our crown, and our reward! alleluia!
We haste along, in pomp and song,
And gladsome join the marriage throng.

Lamb of God, the heavens adore thee,
And men and angels sing before thee,
With harp and cymbal's clearest tone.
By the pearly gates in wonder
We stand, and swell the voice of thunder,
That echoes round thy dazzling throne.
No vision ever brought,
No ear hath ever caught,
Such bliss and joy;
We raise the song, we swell the throng,
To praise thee ages all along.

Wake, awake, for night is flying, The watchmen on the heights are crying, Awake, Jerusalem, arise! Midnight's solemn hour is tolling, His chariot wheels are nearer rolling, He comes; prepare, ye virgins wise. Rise up with willing feet Go forth, the bridegroom meet; alleluia! Bear through the night your well-trimmed light, Speed forth to join the marriage rite. Truly the watchmen who are the prophets of old sound their resounding calls to awaken from our unbecoming sleep and arise to greet the coming Lord of Light and Heaven. This first stanza employs the vision of the watchmen, long situated in the heights of Heaven whose voices, being dead, yet live to remind us in God's Word of the preparation needed for the coming Wedding Feast of the great King. The last line in this stanza, "Go forth, the bridegroom meet; alleluia! Bear through the night your well-trimmed light, Speed forth to join the marriage rite," points to the ten virgins of Matthew 25.

Zion hears the watchmen singing, Her heart with deep delight is springing, She wakes, she rises from her gloom; Forth her bridegroom comes, all-glorious, In grace arrayed, by truth victorious; Her star is risen, her light is come! All hail, incarnate lord, Our crown, and our reward! alleluia! We haste along, in pomp and song, And gladsome join the marriage throng. The Ten Virgins are equivalent to Zion, or the Church in our day. Let us remember that all ten were virgins – morally sound young women in the eyes of the world and even church. But only five had the spiritual fire needed to enter into the marriage feast. That fire was ruled by love in their hearts for Christ and not any sense of

self-righteousness. They were not slack in their preparation. The fire that motivates obedience to God in the Christian heart is fueled by LOVE for Him.

Lamb of God, the heavens adore thee, And men and angels sing before thee, With harp and cymbal's clearest tone. By the pearly gates in wonder We stand, and swell the voice of thunder, That echoes round thy dazzling throne. No vision ever brought, No ear hath ever caught, Such bliss and joy; We raise the song, we swell the throng, To praise thee ages all along. Ah, yes, those Pearly Gates whose covering is of pearls formed by the tears of the martyred saints. Amazing that our unrefined earthly voices shall rise to meet the excellency of the heavenly voices as we join with the angels in thunderous song. *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."* (1 Cor 2:9)

Though we have never seen with the eye, and have not heard the glorious sound with the ear, and could not comprehend in the heart the enormity of the joy; yet, we have gained glimpses by solitary moments of being raised to the third heaven in Spirit and joy unsurpassable. Those moments come during the quiet, still moments of the soul when daily trade and barter do not drown out the Holy Voice very much like the gurgling of the underground river of Sychar that feeds Jacob's Well and the pastureland without the city, and whose warbling sound can only be heard at night when the feet of man and animals are stilled. May each reader of this devotion be privileged to say with Job during the day of his vexation: *"Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.* (Job 19:23-27)