

I remember so well...my first Christmas as a true Christ-follower! Oh, yes, I had swarms of Christmas memories before that amazing year in 1968. I had celebrated the birth of Christ, sung the carols, swapped gifts, watched the TV specials, and enjoyed all the decorations and Christmas parties. I had good memories of Christmas mornings with my mother, daddy and younger brother. I had precious memories of our Christmases with our own children, who were almost one, three and five that year.

I remember one year (1956), my daddy had a major, financial setback when someone in another town embezzled the cash from a business venture and then fled the state. Mother and Daddy could not really shop for us that year as Daddy was determined to personally pay back all of his friends who had invested in that side business with him. In the absence of multiple gifts (we only had a couple each) our parents blew up balloons and had them all over the floor. When we walked in on Christmas morning my brother and I were delighted. Mother and Daddy thought we would be so disappointed. Even today my brother and I reminisce as adults on how that was one of our very best Christmas mornings as children.

There must be so many parents today who are unable to give gifts to their children because of lost jobs, financial issues, sickness, etc. Perhaps the balloon idea will be helpful! Of course, love is the greatest gift, and blowing up all those balloons had to be a sacrificial love gift from Mother and Daddy to us.

However, nothing compares to my first Christmas in 1968 as a newly born-again, Christ-follower! All those years of singing and memorizing carols came back to me with freshness only the Holy Spirit could bring. My favorite carol that year was the one I understood for the very first time—*Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!* I will underline the words that came alive spiritually for me!

**Hark, the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

**Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

**Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

Charles Wesley, written in 1739

Now you see just why that particular song came alive to me. Jesus was now my King; I was reconciled to God even though I was a sinner deserving nothing; Christ was now my everlasting Lord; He was part of the Godhead, incarnate Deity; He was the Son of Righteousness; He was born that I no more may die—He gave me eternal life; He was born to give me second birth—now I was born again and a new creation. Glory to the newborn King!

There will be thousands of people all over the world who will really experience Christmas this year for the first time just as I did so many years ago! May you and all your family and friends have a glorious Christmas and New Year enjoying the Gift of His Son, our Lord and Savior, and soon-coming King, Jesus Christ.