

# Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying

Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme

8.9.8. 8.9.8. 6.6.4. 4.4.8.

Wachet auf

Philipp Nicolai, 1599

Philipp Nicolai, 1599

Tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1863, alt.

Setting: *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 1941, alt.

“Wake, a - wake, for night is fly - ing,” The watch-men on the  
Mid-night hears the wel-come voic - es And at the thrill-ing

heights are cry - ing; “A - wake, Je - ru - sa - lem, a - rise!”  
cry re - joic - es: “Oh, where are ye, ye vir-gins wise?”

The Bride - groom comes, a - wake! Your lamps with glad-ness take!

Al - le - lu - ia! With brid-al care Your-selves pre - pare

To meet the Bride - groom, who is near.”

2 Zion hears the watchmen singing,  
And all her heart with joy is springing,  
She wakes, she rises from her gloom;  
For her Lord comes down all-glorious,  
The strong in grace, in truth victorious,  
Her Star is ris'n, her Light is come.  
“Now come, Thou worthy Crown,  
Lord Jesus, God's own Son,  
Hail! Hosanna!  
The joyful call  
We answer all  
And follow to the nuptial hall.”

3 Gloria to Thee is ringing,  
With tongues of men and angels singing,  
With harp and cymbal's clearest tone.  
Of twelve pearls the shining portals,  
Where, dwelling with the blest immortals,  
We gather round Thy radiant throne.  
No eye hath e'er beheld,  
No ear hath heard the swell  
Of such glory;  
Therefore will we  
Eternally  
Sing hymns of praise and joy to Thee.

The “King of Chorales,” Philipp Nicolai’s “Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying (*Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*)” originally appeared at the conclusion of the author’s devotional book, *Joyful Mirror of Eternal Life (Frewden-Spiegel dess ewigen Lebens)*, in 1599, alongside its companion hymn, the “Queen of Chorales,” “How Lovely Shines the Morning Star (*Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*).” It was printed with the caption, “On the voice at midnight, and on the wise virgins, who go to meet their heavenly Bridegroom, Matt. 25.” The hymn was intended as an expression of comfort in the midst of the plague that had afflicted and devastated Nicolai’s parish. The text of the German original is a reverse acrostic, with the initials W (“*Wachet*”), Z (“*Zion*”), and G (“*Gloria*”), which begin each of the three stanzas respectively, standing for “Graf zu Waldeck,” the Count of Waldeck, a student of Nicolai’s who died during the plague at the age of fifteen. The hymn is rife with eschatological language, expressing the hope that those whose lives were taken by the plague are now singing before God with joy inexpressible.

The hymn appears in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 1941, No. 609, and in the *Lutheran Service Book*, 2006, No. 516. Both use an altered version of the translation by Catherine Winkworth, 1863, which has become a classic in itself. The text has been only slightly altered for the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book in the second and third stanzas, so as to reproduced more closely the scriptural language of Nicolai’s German, and to complete the acrostic present in the original.

Nicolai’s tune as it originally appeared in 1599 posed some metrical difficulties, which were dealt with in different ways by two influential four-part settings produced within the next five years, one by Johann Georg Schott in 1603, the other by Jacob Praetorius in 1604. It is the latter that formed the basis for the version of the melody found in the *Lutheran Service Book*, while the former influenced the version found in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, which in turn has been used with slight alterations for the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book. Both text and music are in the public domain and may be freely used and reproduced for any purpose whatever. They are offered with the prayer that they may serve for the edification of Christian people everywhere. For more information, visit the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book at:

[www.lutheranchoralebook.com](http://www.lutheranchoralebook.com).

## The Free Lutheran Chorale-Book

*presents*

# Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying

*by*

Philipp Nicolai

*and translated by*

Catherine Winkworth

*published in*

Davenport, Iowa  
2015