

A Deeper Christmas

Thought-provoking

reflections,

prayers, and

new hymns

for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany

Ken Bible

LNW*books*.com

A DEEPER CHRISTMAS, p.2

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Introducing Jesus Christ

Introduction

Jesus said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.
(Luke 24:25, 27, NASB)

Imagine that you'd like to get to know a certain city. Maybe you're visiting on vacation, or perhaps you're considering moving there. There are several ways you can approach the task.

You can explore the city up close. Spend some time. Visit its sites. Drive its streets. Eat in its restaurants. Walk its neighborhoods. Observe the people and interact with them.

Or, you can observe the city as a whole, from a distance. Go up in an airplane and get a perspective that you can't get up close. See its overall character and layout. Learn how it fits into the geography of the region. Drink in the panorama.

The Bible gives us both perspectives on Jesus Christ. In the Gospels we see Him up close. We walk with Him, eat with Him, watch Him in various settings, and hear from the people who knew Him.

In the Old Testament prophets we see Him from a distance. These prophets wrote many centuries before He was born. Though their prophecies are amazingly detailed, they are most moving in their overall view of Him. We see Him in context. We get a broad perspective on His character. We see how He fits into the Father's plan and purpose for all of history.

It's said that up close, sometimes we can't see the forest for the trees. Applying that to Jesus Christ, the prophets give us a great view of the forest in all its richness and beauty.

As they view Jesus towering over all history, the prophets struggle to describe Him in terms that are understandable to us yet still do justice to His greatness, the depth of His character, and His impact on our lives. He is:

- a great Light in our darkness (Isaiah 9:2; 60:1-6).
- a mighty King who will rule everywhere and forever (Isaiah 9:6-7; 16:5; Zechariah 9:9-10; 2 Samuel 7:16; Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalms 2; 72).

- a Deliverer and Provider (Isaiah 61:1-3).
- a Redeemer and Savior (Isaiah 63:7-9).
- a Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19).
- a Priest (Psalm 110:4).
- a Servant who gives Himself for His people (Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12).
- a Shepherd (Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:22-24; Micah 5:2-5a).
- God with Us (Isaiah 7:14; 40:9-10).

Much more is said of Him. But in the pieces that follow, we will focus on just a few of the Bible's images of Jesus Christ. In addition to the Old Testament pictures, we've included some from the New Testament. All give us the broad picture of Him, the panorama, and all are focused on the significance of His coming. Images related specifically to His ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection will be left for another day.

The individual pictures will be tapestries woven from scripture, a reflection, a prayer, and a thought-provoking new hymn. We pray that together, they stimulate your mind, heart and imagination.

To hear and see the hymns, just follow the links to LNWhymns.com. There you'll find these hymns and many more, all free.

I hope that in these tapestries you will clearly see Jesus Christ in all His divine and human beauty, and that you will be drawn deeper into the magnificent person that He is.

Ken Bible

What Does Christ Think of Christmas?

Each year as I approach Christmas, I brace myself for the rigorous schedule. I think of the huge investments of time and energy. I quietly wonder if, spiritually speaking, we're really getting our money's worth out of all this. What does Christ think of our Christmas celebrations anyway? How much of it is even pleasing to Him?

Remember that He is the One who saw straight through empty words and ceremony. He was absolutely ruthless toward such "praise." His quotation of Isaiah 29:13 still rings in my ears:

*These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.
They worship me in vain. (Matthew 15:8-9, NIV)*

When the disciples were impressed by the beauty of the Temple, Jesus spoke God's displeasure and foretold its complete destruction. He was vehement as He condemned the Pharisees for their pomp and pride. They made a show of their religion while ignoring what matters most to God.

Instead, Jesus was impressed by the selfless, tenacious faith of the Syro-phenician woman, by the quiet dedication of the widow giving her mite, and by the desperately honest prayer, "*God, have mercy on me, a sinner*" (Luke 18:13).

He gently rebuked His good friend Martha for her well-intentioned busy-ness. Her sister, Mary, had chosen the only thing that was needed: to sit and quietly listen at the Lord's feet (Luke 10:38-42).

What would this Jesus think of our Christmas celebrations?

Or more properly, what would He think of *my* Christmas celebrations? All true worship takes place in the heart, so if true worship is lacking, the problem is in me.

In spite of all the "religious activity" that goes on, I've found that Christmas can be a barren time spiritually. Often little happens between God and me – little real celebration of what He has done, little true worship, little heart-to-heart with my Father. If nothing is happening in my heart, what good is any of the celebrating?

Our Lord, our Savior, we want to spend this Christmas with You, looking to You, worshiping You, and hearing Your voice.

What's in a Name? Jesus Christ

"Jesus" is His first name, like "Justin" or "Emily" (they didn't use last names). "Jesus" was a common name at the time. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew name, "Joshua," which means, "The Lord saves." Before He was born, the angel commanded His parents to name Him "*Jesus*, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

"Christ" is His title. It's the Greek word for "Messiah," which means "The Anointed One."

Thus "Jesus Christ" is His name and His title. It means "Jesus Messiah."

Christ Our Pattern

*Read Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 1:20;
2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:9-12; Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9-10*

Jesus Christ is not simply the corrective
for humanity gone wrong.
He is humanity's original blueprint,
our model,
our pattern,
the original purpose and prototype that drove our creation.

We were designed and created to be like Him:
holy – completely separated to God the Father;
a ruler – overseeing God's wondrous creation;
a servant – humbly, eagerly doing the Father's will;
God's child – gloriously, lovingly like Him.

We were fashioned to focus on Him.
We were given
a mind, that we might know Him;
eyes, that we might see His glory;
hands, that we might serve Him;
feet, that we might run to do His will;
a mouth, that we might praise Him;
deep desires, that we might desire Him.

The Father's purpose has never changed.
His determination has never wavered,
despite our sin.
The sure destiny of all who trust in Christ is
to be like Him,
to be one with Him –
members of His own body,
His living temple,
His dearly-loved bride.

Jesus Christ is our Source, and
He is our eternal destination.

Christ, Our Source and Goal

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

From forever to forever,
From our birthplace in Your heart,
Christ the dream that drove creation,
Christ our model from the start.
Christ the ruler, Christ the servant,
Christ the source and Christ the goal,
Christ the true, eternal Adam,
Christ the pattern, Christ the whole.

From the garden to Mount Sinai
To King David on his throne,
Christ the sun that cast the shadows,
Christ the promise, Christ alone.
From the stable to Golgotha
To His reigning at Your side,
Christ the Savior, Christ the Sovereign,
Christ preparing for His bride.

Christ the light of all creation,
Christ the longing of each heart,
All the means and all the meaning,
Life's completion, and its start.
We have minds that we might know Him,
Lips to sing His glorious name,
Lives to share His living Spirit,
Love to set His world aflame.

A Christ-centered Year

During Advent, Jesus is the Promise of the Father.

During Christmas, He is the Gift of the Father. He is all the fullness of God embodied in a human infant.

During Epiphany, Jesus is the Light of the Father, drawing all people to Himself.

During Lent, He is the Father's Servant, leading us on the path of obedience and trust.

During Holy Week, Jesus is the Love of the Father, humbly submitting to death on the cross.

During Easter, He is the Life of the Father, overcoming death and sin forever.

On Ascension Day, Jesus is at the Father's right hand, reigning as Sovereign Lord and King.

On Pentecost, He pours out the Promise of the Father, baptizing every believer in the Holy Spirit of God.

On Trinity Sunday, Jesus ushers us into the full unity, love, and fellowship of Father, Son, and Spirit.

During Ordinary Time, Jesus helps us order our lives by His teaching and example. He gives us His Spirit as a down-payment while we eagerly await His promised Advent.

On All Saints Day, Jesus unites us with all God's children of all nations and all ages.

On Christ the King Sunday, we rise up together and crown Jesus King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Brothers and sisters, let's constantly celebrate all God has done for us in Jesus Christ! Let's make this a Christ-centered year.

We Fix Our Eyes on Jesus Christ

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

We fix our eyes on Jesus Christ,
Our brother and our Lord,

Our Great High Priest and sacrifice,
Our captain, shield, and sword.
He laid aside His majesty,
Was born to serve and die.
Now reigning at the Father's right,
The Son is lifted high!

Surrounded by His witnesses,
With Christ before our eyes,
We throw aside what weighs us down
And run to gain the prize.
What joy is ours in Jesus Christ!
We feast on Living Bread!
His light is shining all around!
His face is just ahead!

We fix our eyes on Jesus Christ
And gladly share His cross.
We set our faith and hope on Him,
Enduring every loss.
O Living Lord, our Light, our Strength,
Our Hope and Morning Star,
We stand and greet eternity
Complete in all You are!

Promises of Christ's Coming

Before the Starry Universe

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Before the starry universe
There reigned the great I Am.
This being wise and wonderful
In love conceived a man.
He formed him in His likeness –
So the mystery began.

Refrain

Praise God for the wonder of His love,
Infinite love!
Praise God for the wonder of His love!

The creature knew his Maker, but
In pride he turned away.
He traded all his riches for
A debt he could not pay.
He clothed himself in suffering and
In deep and fearful shame.

But God refused to turn away,
So driven by His love.
He laid aside His splendor just
To draw us all above.
Our Lord is now Immanuel,
A child of flesh and blood.

Early Promises of Messiah

Read Genesis 3:14-19; 6:5-9; 8:18-22; 9:8-15; 12:1-3; Genesis 15:1-6

Hear God's promise to Adam and Eve.
Though they had just sinned away their perfect life,
 God was already beginning to unveil His plan of salvation.
He decreed that an age-long battle would ensue between Satan and
 Eve's descendants.
Then a descendant of Eve,
 a Son of Man,
would strike Satan's head,
 forever ending his destructive influence over our race.
With paradise destroyed only minutes before,
 God was already pointing us toward
 a Deliverer.

Hear God's promise to Noah.
The waters of judgment had just dissipated, and
 God was already promising that
 He would never again destroy all living creatures.
No matter how bad evil would become,
 death would not win.
 Life would win.
Holy God was committed to our redemption.
Just as He had saved the world
 because of and through
 one righteous man, Noah,
He would finally and completely save the world
 because of and through
 another Righteous Man,
 perfect and pleasing in His sight.
A Righteous Redeemer was coming.
Life would win!

Hear God's promises to Abraham.
God came to him making
 lavish demands and
 lavish promises.
God said, "Follow me!
 Leave your homeland and all that is safe and familiar, and
 begin a journey to a far-away country that I will show you.
Give up everything, and
 simply trust Me.
I will make you a great nation.
I will bless you, and
I will bless all peoples of the earth through you."

Through Abraham, God would begin raising up
a great and mighty nation,
a nation spanning every place and time,
a people uniquely blessed
because they simply trust Sovereign God.
All God's lavish promises would come to full fruition in
the Author and Perfecter of Our Faith,
Jesus Christ.

All We Need

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

The work is done, His gift complete,
For Jesus Christ is all we need.
He lives the life we long to lead,
And He is ours and all we need.
His holy heart now beats within.
We live and move and love in Him.
His life is everlasting seed,
And faith in Christ is all we need.

When weakness seems our sure defeat,
Lord Jesus Christ is all we need.
His sovereign will is power indeed.
We come to Him for all we need.
His promise stands forever sure.
Our Rock is firm, our Hope secure.
His death and life have guaranteed
That faith in Christ is all we need.

This world began, its end will be
In Him whose Word is all we need.
He calls His own to just believe
That Jesus Christ is all we need.
This world will soon go up in flame.
Our confidence will be the same,
For God Himself will be our creed,
And He is all, and all we need.

God's Promise to Moses

In Deuteronomy 18, as Moses neared the time of his death, he told the people of Israel:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

“The LORD said to me: ...’I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites; I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.” (vv.15, 17-19, NIV)

In Moses' day, the nations around Israel used various kinds of magic and superstitious practices to learn the will of the gods. God forbade such sorcery in Israel. He chose to make His will known through His prophets. And unlike the mysterious messages of pagan soothsayers and mediums, God's words would be clear and understandable.

In the passage above, God is promising to raise up a succession of prophets who would faithfully speak His will to His people. We read the revelations of many of those prophets in our Old Testament. But when the prophets quit coming, the hopes aroused by Deuteronomy 18 began to focus on one Prophet who would come and fully reveal all God's will for His people. This one Prophet would be Messiah Himself.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, many saw Him as this promised Prophet:

John 1:45 records: *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”* (NASB)

In John 6:14, when the people saw that Jesus had fed the five thousand, they said, *“This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”* (NASB)

And in John 7:40, when the people heard Jesus' teaching in the temple, they said, *“This certainly is the Prophet.”* (NASB)

Peter, in speaking to the Jews about the One they had crucified, said:

“Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer...For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you...’ Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.” (Acts 3:17-18, 22, 24, NIV)

Jesus told those questioning His authority,

“If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.” (John 5:46, NASB)

And on the evening after His resurrection, Jesus conversed with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and *“beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures”* (Luke 24:27, NASB).

As the centuries progressed, God’s prophets were distilled into God’s Prophet, and God’s words became God’s Word, Jesus Christ. Hear Hebrews 1:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (vv. 1-3, NIV)

*Father,
Your power, Your wisdom, and Your love
have said all they have to say
in Jesus Christ.
Help me to listen.*

The Word of God Is Jesus Christ

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

The Word of God is Jesus Christ,
God's love forever speaking,
The love that willed the worlds to be,
A love forever seeking.
In Him was life, the one true Light
That shines through all creation,
The Light that calls all hearts to Him
From every age and nation.

The Word of God is flesh and blood.
God's heart has fully spoken.
In Christ we share the Father's life
With holy joy unbroken.
Now grace and truth are daily fruit
Of love beyond all knowing.

A DEEPER CHRISTMAS, p.20

We lift our face to Christ and drink
God's fullness overflowing.

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God's Promise to David

King David had wanted to build a temple, a house for God.
But God turned the tables on David.
Instead of David building a house for God, God answered that
He would build a house for David.
Hear God's words through the prophet Nathan:

"This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?

"The LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son... My love will never be taken away from him... Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever. (2 Samuel 7:5, 11b-16, NIV)

To Adam, trapped by sin, God had promised a Deliverer.
To Noah, facing extermination, God had promised Life.
To Abraham, enduring the curse of childlessness,
God had promised Great Blessing and a Great Nation.
To Moses, struggling to lead a vast and rebellious people,
God had promised to faithfully speak His Word.

Now to David, Israel's greatest king, God promised a Kingdom.
His would be a lasting Kingdom.
To this mortal king, doomed to die,
God promised a Throne that would never pass away.
The house God would build for David
would be a line of rulers whose Kingdom would never end.
David's son would be God's own Son,
loved from all eternity.
Solomon and the other kings of Judah would be a limited fulfillment of the promise.
God's promise would be complete in Jesus Christ.
The eternal Kingdom would come in Him.

In Christ we receive all God's gifts in their entirety,
in all their richness,
full strength and undiluted.
We receive His love in all its length, depth, breadth, and height.

*Father, my one ambition,
my one treasure is
Jesus Christ,*

*for in Him I gain You,
with all You are and all You give.*

Knowing the Father in the Son

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

O Living Christ, we drink from You
Our Father's breath, our Father's voice.
In You we feel His tender heart
And taste His deep, eternal joys.
We see Your life and long to live
The perfect peace Your Father gives.

The Father's will, the Father's work
Is all You seek, Your one desire.
Your life in Him is faith and joy,
Your love for Him, a holy fire,
A love unchanged in life and death,
A love that fills Your final breath.

In You, O Christ, we share Your heart:
The Father is our one desire.
In You all life is faith and joy,
A song of praise, a holy fire,
For death is dead, His life begun
In You, the Father's glorious Son!

The Golden Kingdom

Read 1 Kings 10:1-9

God blessed King Solomon with
wisdom,
wealth, and
luxury beyond description.

Even other kings and queens,
accustomed to all the best,
found Solomon's kingdom beyond imagining.

But the whole story is not so glorious.

This wisest of kings married many foreign women, and
they led him into idolatry.

Political and military troubles increased in his later years.

Solomon's son reaped the bitter fruit of some of Solomon's practices:

ten of the tribes of Israel broke away and formed their own country,
leaving Solomon's heirs with only two tribes to govern.

The Golden Kingdom was gone as quickly as it had come.

The wisest and richest of kings left a tarnished legacy.

But Solomon's kingdom,
however imperfect and short-lived,
foreshadowed Christ and
pointed us to Him.

The greatest of earthly wealth and wisdom proved to be
only a foretaste of the boundless gifts

God gives to His people in His Anointed One,
Jesus Christ.

In Him

"are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3, NASB).

In Him

"something greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42, NASB).

*Father, may what little I do,
no matter how
flawed and
temporary in itself,
point people to Jesus Christ.*

O Father, Give Us Jesus Christ (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

O Father, give us Jesus Christ,
Your only-begotten Son,
Your life, Your love, Yourself,
Your holy heaven here begun,

The treasure of Your boundless wealth,
Your Spirit, Your mind, Your heart,
Your glory all made flesh,
Your grace and truth in living art,

Bridge

The way to You, our Father,
All human, all divine,
The door to life eternal
And its bread and wine!

O Father, give us Jesus Christ,
Your only-begotten Son,
Our life, our light, our joy,
Our endless Eden re-begun,

Our treasure and our priceless pearl,
Love's blessing forever new.
In Jesus Christ we live,
Our Father, ever all in You!

The Blessings of the King

Read Isaiah 8:19 – 9:5

Isaiah spoke these words from God to a people who refused to trust Him. They preferred a religion more accommodating to their lifestyle, more touchable, more socially acceptable, one that catered to their desires. In troubled times when they needed help, they turned to another country, or another god, or to their own abilities or wealth. They consulted mediums, looking to the dead for help. Does any of this sound familiar?

Isaiah 8:21-22 describes the fate of all who worship “gods” that are not God. They feed on what can never satisfy them. The result is hunger, fear, darkness, anger, gloom, and ultimate disappointment. Desperate, they curse all authority. They ignore God their entire lives, then when tough times come, they blame Him. Rejecting Him, they have separated themselves from the only source of life and all that is good.

But look at the first word in the very next verse: “nevertheless” (Isaiah 9:1, NIV). God doesn’t reject us when we reject Him. His love pursues us. He doesn’t wait for us to deserve His gifts, or even to seek them. He longs to bless us, and He will not give up.

His blessings would begin among those who had suffered the most. Zebulun and Naphtali were the northernmost tribes of Israel, near the Sea of Galilee. Because of their location, they were the first to be attacked by invaders, who often came from the north, and they were the most subject to corruption from surrounding heathen nations.

Jesus was raised in this area and spent most of his life there. He grew up in Nazareth, as an adult moved to Capernaum, and began His ministry in the region of Galilee. (See Matthew 4:12-16.)

God was determined to lift these deluded, oppressed people. His words are bursting at the seams with promised blessings.

Imagine those who had long been engulfed in darkest gloom, now suddenly bathed in beautiful sunlight!

Imagine those consumed with anger and need, now caught up in utter joy—joy that surpasses even our greatest times of abundance and jubilation!

Imagine those long enslaved and oppressed, now suddenly set completely free! It would be as exhilarating as when Gideon delivered them from the Midianites, in Judges 6 & 7.

Imagine all the tools of war, conflict, suffering, and death being destroyed in one massive bonfire, never to be used again!

God was longing to give them a glimpse of a happiness that was beyond their imagining. Our world and our entire lives have been darkened by separation from God.

We have no experience to help us grasp the light, the joy, and the freedom that our loving God plans to lavish on His people.

All these blessings would come to us in one perfect and surprising Gift!

*Focus on knowing and following
Jesus Christ.
All God's blessings are coming to us
in Him.*

Isaiah 9

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Darkness and shadow grip the earth.
See the light! The day is dawning!
See the light! The day is dawning!
Darkness and shadow grip the earth.
See the light! The day is dawning!
See the light! The day is dawning!
Taste the joy and feel the freedom! Peace is coming,
And all nations will call Him
Wonderful
Counselor,
The Mighty God,
The Everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.

For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given,
Unto us a Son is given.
For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government shall be upon His shoulder,
And all nations will call Him
Wonderful
Counselor,
The Mighty God,
The Everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace,

A DEEPER CHRISTMAS, p.27

The Everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.

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The Magnificence of the King

Read Isaiah 9:6-7; 16:5; 32:1-4

The previous portion of Isaiah 9, verses 2-5, spoke of a crescendo of incredible blessings: light, joy, abundance, freedom, victory, and peace. How would all these unimaginable gifts arrive?

Now the answer comes: a child, a son would be born. All our care, all our leadership and welfare would be on His shoulders. And what kind of leader, what kind of king would He be? If names could describe the true character and significance of a person, what would His names be? As the earlier passage struggled to communicate the depth and breadth of the gifts He would bring, here human language struggles to capture the majesty of all He is. Translating a bit more literally, His names would be:

Wonder of a Counselor—His wisdom would be truly extraordinary!

Colossians 2:3 says that in Christ *are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

God of Might—He would be a mighty warrior, a great champion. He would be Sovereign God.

Jesus...said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*
(Matthew 28:18, NIV)

Father of Eternity—This King would have the tenderness of a Father whose love is unending and forever.

Jesus said, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV)

Prince of Peace—Peace is not just the absence of conflict. It is a positive word, encompassing all the best of life: completeness, harmony, and well-being. It is full and unimpaired relationships in every aspect of life.

Philippians 4:7 promises this: *The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
(Philippians 4:7, NIV)

Incredible wisdom, sovereign power, unending love, and complete well-being—this King would bring us all the qualities of God Himself.

What's more, His rule and the peace He brings would continue to increase forever—not by force, but by justice and righteousness, by doing all that is good and right. The perfect will of our loving Father would blossom and grow in every life, throughout the universe.

These magnificent promises come with a guarantee, at the end of verse 7:

The deep, burning, unquenchable love of the Great I AM, Lord of all the Heavenly Armies, will do this!

Now that's a guarantee!

These verses promise what we deeply desire: the continual increase of His rule, His will, His character, and His peace in our minds, hearts, and lives. That process, that growth has begun already in everyone who trusts Him. The darkness is gone, and the Light has come. Here and now we are tasting His wisdom, His power, His unfailing love, and His deep peace, all through the Spirit of Jesus Christ within. And we are “*confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*” (Philippians 1:6, NIV)

*Jesus Christ, our Brother, is
Lord of all things in this world and the next,
all things seen and unseen,
in heaven and earth.
We are secure and
eternally, extravagantly blessed in Him.*

Antiphonal Carol (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Group 1: Unto us a Child is born.
Group 2: Unto us a Child is born.
Group 1: Unto us a Son is given.
Group 2: Unto us a Son is given.
Group 1: Power and authority
Group 2: Power and authority
Group 1: On His shoulders have been laid.
Group 2: On His shoulders have been laid.
All: And His name is

Refrain

Group 1: Wonderful
Group 2: Wonderful
Group 1: Counsellor
Group 2: Counsellor
All: Almighty God,
The Everlasting Father.
He is
Group 1: Wonderful
Group 2: Wonderful
Group 1: Counsellor
Group 2: Counsellor
All: Almighty God,

The Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

Group 1: Glory be to God on high!
Group 2: Glory be to God on high!
Group 1: Praise and glory in the highest!
Group 2: Praise and glory in the highest!
Group 1: God has given Him a name,
Group 2: God has given Him a name,
Group 1: Name above all other names.
Group 2: Name above all other names.
All: And His name is

Jesus!

The Ultimate King

Read Psalm 72

Psalm 72 is a royal psalm, probably written as a prayer for the king's coronation. Its heading or title is literally "Of Solomon" in the original Hebrew. This could mean that it was written by him, for him, about him, or that it belonged to him. Down through the centuries, most have considered it a prayer by David for his son, Solomon.

So what does a royal psalm have to do with Messiah? God guaranteed that David would always have a descendant ruling as king. Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, such as Isaiah 9:1-7, say that Messiah will be the final fulfillment of this promise. Thus the royal psalms, though originally written about an earthly king, find their ultimate fulfillment in the ultimate King, Jesus Christ.

With that in mind, notice what Psalm 72 tells us about Christ's reign:

1. He will be gifted with God's own justice and rightness. What higher prayer or praise could we ever have for our leader than that He always be completely just and right as God Himself is just and right?
2. Prosperity – people always want their leader to bring them prosperity. Under Christ, creation itself will pour out on His people all the natural, lavish, overflowing fruitfulness of its Creator. Christ will bring the fullness of all God's blessings, all that the Father's heart ever wanted for His children.
3. Unlike many leaders, His friends won't be the rich oppressors. He will crush them. Those nearest to Him will be the weak, helpless, and needy. Christ will be their Champion.
4. He will rule forever. Other human kings are limited by human weakness. They come and go, they fade and die. Christ breathes the unending, unlimited life of God. He and His Kingdom are forever.
5. Christ will not simply be a Jewish king, or the Lord for Christians or for one country alone. He will be Sovereign Ruler of the entire earth, King of all Kings and Lord of all Lords.

Christ will be the Ultimate King: universal and eternal, bringing overflowing prosperity and God's perfect justice to everyone, everywhere, including the most helpless among us. In Him the highest hopes of heaven and earth will forever become reality.

*If you want to see your future,
look at Jesus Christ.
We will be
like Him,*

*with Him, and
in Him,
completely and forever.*

Hallelujah Hymn (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Almighty, sovereign Lord!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Creation all restored,
Peace, love, and justice flow as a river,
For You will reign, our God forever and ever!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
We shout around Your throne:
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
All kingdoms are Your own.
Praise You, we praise You, glorious Savior,
For You will reign, our God forever and ever!

King of Kings and Lord of Lords!
King of Kings and Lord of Lords!
For You will reign, our God forever and ever!
Hallelujah!

Kingdom of Peace

Read Isaiah 11:1-9

Peace begins in God.
It begins with His completeness in Himself and
with the love and perfect unity among the
Father, Son, and Spirit.

Peace comes to us in Christ.
He who is one with the Father and
one with the Spirit became
one of us.
And as we simply trust Him, like children,
He becomes one *with* us.

When Christ has finished what He has started,
when we are one with Him, we will be
one with the Father and
one with the Spirit as well.
As we are one with them,
we will also be one with each other,
and the peace of God will be perfect and complete.
Creation itself will then be transformed.

As Romans 8 says:

*The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.
For the creation was subjected to frustration...
in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and
brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (vv.19-21, NIV)*

Peace will reign in all creation:
no more disharmony; only
unity,
contentment,
completeness, and
well-being;
full, open, fruitful, unimpaired relationships throughout all reality.
Just imagine!

Beauty and truth,
pleasure and purity,
humanity and holiness,
justice and mercy, will be
full and in perfect harmony,
just as they have always been
full and in perfect harmony in God.
Art and science,

celebration and reflection,
giving and receiving,
worship and play
will simply be facets of being
 in Him
 constantly and completely.

Everyone will be
beautiful in their God-breathed individuality.
We will be
 like Him,
 with Him, and
 complete in Him
forever.

O come, Prince of Peace!

Sweet Peace

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Sweet peace, deep peace
In Jesus Messiah;
No fear, no fear
Is found in Him.
His Spirit will flow
And fill all creation
With peace in the fullness of God.

The wolf with the lamb,
The calf with the lion--
A child will be their shepherd.
They will live as one.
The Lord will reign
In justice forever,
And wrong will be no more.

The Shepherd King

Read Isaiah 40:9-11; Micah 5:2-5; Ezekiel 34:2-5, 20-24

Sheep and shepherds were a fixture of daily life in biblical times. Everyone was familiar with them. Thus “shepherds” was a common figure of speech for leaders, from kings on down. These “shepherds” were to lead their flock to food and water. They were to provide protection for everyone and special care for those who needed it.

But not all shepherds took their jobs seriously. Ezekiel spoke of leaders who cared for themselves rather than the flock. The *fed* on the flock rather than *feeding* the flock. Through both Ezekiel and the prophet Micah, God said that He would not stand by while His flock was neglected. The unfaithful shepherds would be judged and struck down.

But He would not leave His people without a shepherd. Both prophets said that God would send a Greater Shepherd, His own Anointed One, Messiah, who would shepherd His people as Loving God desired. This Great Shepherd would be from the line of King David, who himself had been a shepherd.

In fact, says Micah, this Shepherd would come from David’s home town, Bethlehem. This tiny village, insignificant by human standards, would provide a second great leader, even greater than King David. God said this leader would come as God’s own agent, not man’s choice. His origins would be “from of old, from ancient times”; that is, He would be part of God’s timeless plan, working since before the foundation of the world. This Leader would “*stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.*” His power would not be limited by human weakness but would be the power and authority of Sovereign God Himself. God’s people would finally live in total security, and the King’s rule would reach “*to the ends of the earth*”.

This King would not simply *bring* peace. He Himself would *be* their peace. Over 700 years later the Apostle Paul would say the same of Jesus Christ,
He himself is our peace. (Ephesians 2:14, NIV)

How appropriate that when Jesus came and was opposed by the false shepherds of His day, He characterized Himself this way:

I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

(John 10:11, NIV)

To our picture of the mighty Messiah King, the Shepherd King brings a personal flavor, a tenderness, an individual attention that all who know Jesus Christ will recognize immediately.

Jesus said, “*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.*” (John 10:27-28, NIV)

*Father, Jesus Christ is my shepherd.
His every word is love, and
His every path leads to You.*

Peace, Peace, Peace
(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Peace, peace, peace –
The gift of Christ is peace.
We walk with God, our past forgiven.
All in Him is life and heaven.
Peace, peace, peace –
The gift of Christ is peace.

Hope, hope, hope –
The light of Christ is hope.
In all our darkness Christ is shining,
Leading upward, faith refining.
Hope, hope, hope –
The light of Christ is hope.

Love, love, love –
The heart of Christ is love.
On all who come He pours His presence-
Life and love in holy essence.
Love, love, love –
The heart of Christ is love.

Joy, joy, joy –
We praise You, Christ, with joy!
Our peace, our hope, our love and treasure,
Highest calling, deepest pleasure!
Joy, joy, joy –
We praise You, Christ, with joy!

The Servant King

Read Isaiah 42:1-4

Hear the affection and enthusiasm in God's voice as He talks about this Special One. God takes particular delight in Him. Note that this is the same way God spoke of Jesus at His baptism, when Jesus was revealed in His humility (Luke 3:21-22), and at His transfiguration, when Jesus was revealed in His glory (Luke 9:35).

God says that He himself has chosen Him, and He will uphold Him. He will equip Him with His own Spirit (see also Isaiah 11:2).

This Chosen One will need this equipping, for His task is a huge one: to establish justice on earth. He will fully establish God's will, God's rightness, God's own character, throughout all creation, in every aspect of society, in every human relationship, and within every heart. He will rid a very unjust world and a very unjust people of all injustice. What a responsibility!

But notice that God calls Him "my Servant." Elsewhere in Isaiah He describes Him as a Mighty Deliverer and the King of All Kings, One who would rule completely, everywhere and forever (Isaiah 9:6). A sovereign king and a servant? This seems like a strange combination of descriptions for the same person.

But think of the qualities of a good servant:

- obedient
- humble, not calling attention to himself.
- selfless, focused only on the agenda and will of his master;
- single-minded, completely devoted to the task

These qualities match the way the Servant will approach His task. Though the work seems overwhelming, notice the unlikely way He will accomplish it.

- He will not shout or cry out.
- He will not raise His voice in the streets or call attention to himself.
- He will be so gentle that He won't break a bent blade of grass nor snuff out the final smoldering of a candle wick.

What a way to conquer the world! Social activists plan public protests and shout their causes in the streets. Politicians spend millions of dollars to fill every communications medium with their voices and images. Conquerors mount military campaigns with brute force, crushing anyone who gets in their way.

This Leader, this Conqueror is humble and gentle and refuses self-promotion. But don't mistake His methods for weakness. He will not falter. He will not be discouraged. And He will fully accomplish His task.

This is my favorite Old Testament picture of Christ. This is the Servant I see in the gospels: single-minded, obedient to His Father, completely dependent on Him, and

totally devoted to His will and His glory. He doesn't call attention to Himself. In fact, we're told that when He healed people, He demanded that they not spread the word about what He had done for them (see Matthew 12:15-21).

He was humble. He came as seemingly the illegitimate son of a peasant girl. He was born in a stable and cradled in an animals' feeding trough because He had no other place. As an adult, He traveled the country without a home. He operated outside human authority. He was as an outcast, scorned as a heretic and a madman. And though completely non-violent and non-political, He was brutally executed as an enemy of church and state.

Yet He will succeed where all others have failed. He will conquer the earth forever and establish perfect justice everywhere, at every level, in every human heart.

This is the Savior I know. I recognize Him. This is the way He works in my life. He is so very gentle and patient, yet so persistent and faithful. I have failed more times than I care to remember. I'm such a slow learner. But He never gets impatient with me or in a rush. He doesn't give up on me, and He doesn't leave me in my sin. He continues to work to establish God's beautiful rightness in absolutely every corner of my life.

What a King! What a Servant! What a Savior!

*Father, let all I am be consumed by a passion
to glorify Jesus Christ.
I want everyone to fully realize
just how marvelous He is!*

See the Servant

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)

[Printed Music](#)

See the Servant
Rising from the heart of God.
See Him coming
With nothing of His own.
Feel His Spirit,
Spirit of the Living God,
Bringing justice
To every tribe and tongue.

Refrain

Meek and lowly, see Him conquer.
Strong and silent, hear Him call.
O so tender to the weakest,
Gentle Lamb and Lord of all!

See the stable.
See the dirt and darkness there.
See a baby
With nothing of His own.
See Him healing,
Just a simple carpenter.
Hear Him asking
For nothing in return.

Hear Him praying,
Bowing to His Father's will.
Watch Him dying,
As silent as a Lamb.
See Him risen,
Leading now a mighty throng.
See them marching
With just a bowl and towel.

The Priest King

Read Psalm 110

As a royal Psalm, Psalm 110 was originally written about an earthly Hebrew king. But since Jesus Christ is the ultimate King, the eternal heir to David's throne, He is the ultimate fulfillment of these psalms. The Apostle Paul and the writer of the book of Hebrews both applied this Psalm to Jesus, as did Jesus Himself. (See 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13; 5:6; Matthew 22:41-46).

Here God has made a number of powerful promises to His Messiah, Jesus:

1. God will subjugate every one of Jesus' enemies (vv.1, 5-6).
2. He will give Him absolute power and authority, even in the midst of those who oppose Him (v.2).
3. Messiah's people will provide a vast and willing army, magnificent in their array, covering the ground like dew, all giving their very best to their King (v.3).

But perhaps the most intriguing promise is in v.4, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." To get the full background on Melchizedek, read Genesis 14. During a war among local kings, Abraham's nephew, Lot, was taken captive, along with all his possessions. Abraham raised an army of 318 trained men of war just from those born in his household. (Now that's a vast estate!) Abraham's household army joined with other allies and pursued the four offending kings, defeated them and brought back Lot along with all the other plunder.

Hebrews 7 summarizes Melchizedek's part in the story:

Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. (7:1-2a, NIV; see also Genesis 14:17-20)

Since the Genesis account says nothing about Melchizedek's human lineage, which was normally a requirement for the priesthood, Hebrews goes on to say this:

Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! (Hebrews 7:3, NIV)

And in response to Abraham being blessed by Melchizedek, Hebrews adds:

And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. (7:7, NIV)

Melchizedek was both a king and a priest, even though by human lineage he didn't qualify as a priest. The Bible gives no word of his origins or his dying but surrounds him with a mysterious, other-worldly air. Even the great Abraham respected his authority.

Then what does Psalm 110 mean when it says that Messiah is “a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek”? Since Messiah came from the tribe of Judah rather than Levi, He did not qualify as a priest by human standards, just as Melchizedek did not. But God made Christ high priest by direct, everlasting appointment. He is “*a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life*” (Hebrews 7:16, NIV). Besides being the Ultimate King, Messiah is the Great High Priest, representing God to His people, and His people to God. He is our mediator. 1 Timothy 2:5 says:

There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (NIV)

We are weak and needy, unholy and unworthy. God is the boundless source of life, love, and all that is good. As our High Priest, Jesus Christ brings us to our Father and our Father to us, forever uniting God and humanity, earth and heaven.

*Father, our future is all in Jesus Christ.
He is our completeness,
our holiness, and
our boundless life.
Today we fix our hearts on Him.*

Our Destiny Is Jesus Christ

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Our destiny is Jesus Christ,
Our heaven all complete,
The broad and bright horizon of
What life in God will be!

Our Great High Priest is Jesus Christ.
Our union is complete:
The fullness of Almighty God
Is now humanity.

Refrain

All praise, all praise,
Holy Father, Spirit, Son!
All praise, all praise,
God has come, and we are one!

Our sacrifice is Jesus Christ.
Salvation is complete.
His suffering for our guilt has bought
Our rich eternity.

Our holiness is Jesus Christ.
Forgiven, cleansed, and freed,
We breathe the holy breath of God
In thought and word and deed.

Refrain

All praise, all praise,
Holy Father, Spirit, Son!
All praise, all praise,
God has come, and we are one!

Son of God

Read Psalm 2

Psalm 2 is another royal psalm. It was originally written about an earthly king, but its ultimate fulfillment is in the Ultimate King, Messiah.

The opening verses paint a sobering picture. Imagine all the most powerful forces on earth combining all their resources toward just one goal: destroying God's people.

Because many of us live in a stable country that guarantees religious freedom and makes reasonable efforts to protect us from violence, we sometimes have trouble identifying with psalms like Psalm 2. We are not threatened with violent persecution for our beliefs. No enemy armies are massing at our border.

But never forget that Satan is constantly, completely opposed to God, His purposes, and His people. He is especially opposed to Jesus Christ, God's Son and Anointed One. Satan enlists all those he influences in this constant, determined opposition. Sometimes his opposition is violent, either through military confrontation or through persecution. When necessary, his opposition is more subtle, taking the form of intellectual, cultural, and social pressure. But whether his methods are overt or hidden, his goal is always the same: the destruction of God's people and all His plans.

So what is God's response to the threat of Satan and all his gathered forces? He laughs! He makes fun of them! He ridicules them! He is not frightened – He's amused! Then He terrifies them by speaking in His burning fury: *"I have installed MY KING on His holy throne! HE is in complete control!"*

Immediately Messiah Himself speaks up, in vv.7-9, and talks about His installation by God.

*He said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have become your Father." (v.7)*

The King that God has enthroned is not just His Chosen One. It is His own Son.

This is not the first time God has expressed His fierce love for His own child. Earlier in the Old Testament, He spoke of the people of Israel as His firstborn son. God sent Moses, a lowly shepherd from the backside of the desert, to the most powerful ruler on earth. He came demanding that Pharaoh give up the people of Israel, his massive slave-labor force. God's instructions to Moses were this:

*"Say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says:
Israel is my **firstborn son**...
Let **my son** go.'" (Exodus 4:22-23, NIV)*

Before the confrontation was over, Egypt's first-born sons all lay dead, and God's "firstborn son" was free.

God's miraculous care for His first-born continued as they spent 40 years in a vast and barren desert, then faced the task of conquering occupied Canaan. Moses comforted Israel with these words:

*"Do not be terrified...The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, **as a father carries his son**, all the way you went until you reached this place."* (Deuteronomy 1:29-31, NIV)

Later, after they were settled in their own land, God gave them David as their king, a man after His own heart. Notice how God describes His love for David, even in all his frailty:

*"My faithful love will be with him...
He will call out to me, '**You are my Father...**'
I will appoint him **my firstborn**,
the most exalted of the kings of the earth.
I will maintain my love to him forever,
and my covenant with him will never fail.
I will establish his line forever,
his throne as long as the heavens endure."*
(Psalm 89:24, 26-29, NIV)

A thousand years later, Jesus Christ came, not only as the promised Son of David, but as the only-begotten Son of God. He is the King spoken of here in Psalm 2. God has appointed Him sovereign, eternal ruler of all the universe. No force in heaven or earth, seen or unseen, can challenge His power and authority.

Almighty God loves Him with the burning, unquenchable love of a Father for His only child. He is our King, now and forever. In Him, we are bold, confident, and secure in the face of every threat, every hardship, and every uncertainty.

*Father, You are sovereign over all reality.
You speak, and it is so.
Why do we hesitate to trust You?
Why are we ever afraid?*

Psalm 2

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Mighty rulers, worldly lords,
Pool their power with just one goal:
Break the bonds of all restraint,
Seize the throne and full control.
He who sits in heaven laughs,
Mocks their vain and petty pride,
Scorns their frail and futile plans,
Throws their hollow threats aside.

Hear Him thunder from on high,
“I have crowned my Sovereign King.
See my Son in splendor reign!
Hear the hymns the heavens bring!
Riches, wisdom, honor, strength—
Total rule is all His own.
Power to crush and power to heal
Evermore are His alone.”

We Your people lift our hands!
Hear our lives and voices sing
Living hymns of loudest praise,
Savior, sovereign King of Kings!
Blessed are all who trust in You,
Prince of Peace and Lord of Life!
Help us speak and live the truth,
Bold in You, Lord Jesus Christ!

Son of Man

Read Daniel 7:1, 9-10, 13-14

Daniel 7 records Daniel's dream, his visions of the future. Four fantastic beasts arise from the sea, each representing a different kingdom that would come and exercise authority for awhile, then pass away.

As the fourth beast is ruling and raging boastfully, the scene changes. Now Daniel sees a vision of the throne room of the universe. God, the Ancient of Days, is ruling in unearthly splendor, surrounded by vast multitudes.

Then Daniel witnesses a stunning, almost unbelievable sight. Into this highest, holiest heaven, a human being, a "son of man," arrives on the clouds and is led into the presence of the Ancient of Days. He is given glory, sovereign authority, and eternal power over all people on earth.

Imagine: a "son of man", a human being, a member of our rebellious race, is gloriously escorted into God's holy presence and given sovereign, universal authority that will never pass away.

While Jesus walked this earth, what was His favorite designation for Himself? It was "Son of Man". This eternal, glorious, divine Being, who had been in the Father's presence from the beginning, chose to refer to Himself as the "Son of Man". He gladly embraced His humanity. He willingly shared our suffering and our curse of death, knowing that when He returned to the Father's presence, He would bring a countless train of redeemed human beings with Him.

When He is finally crowned, we will be there. We will reign with Him and share His magnificence and His glory. Never again will anyone say, "I am only human". Our curse will be gone forever.

*Father,
Creator,
Sovereign Savior,
thank You for all that we are becoming in Jesus Christ!*

See All That Human Can Be (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

See all that human can be:
Holy and fearless and free.
See Jesus Christ:
God with a human face,
Sharing our daily race,
Making our commonplace
Holy delight.

Jesus, our Adam divine,
First of our heavenly line!
What a new day:
Sin with its guilt and shame,
Death and its awful claim
Now in His mighty name
Taken away!

Breathe now the Father and Son,
Joy in the Spirit begun!
Taste your new life:
All will be harmony,
Endless discovery,
Glorious reality
In Jesus Christ!

God with Us

Read Isaiah 7:1-16

Matthew 1:23 is quoting Isaiah 7:14 when it says:

*The virgin will be with child and
will give birth to a son, and
they will call him "Immanuel"—
which means, "God with us." (NIV)*

Isaiah chapter 7 describes a dark time for the Jewish nation, Judah. They were under a serious threat from an alliance of their neighbors.

God sent the prophet Isaiah to Ahaz, King of Judah, to tell him to hold steady and not be afraid, for the threat would come to nothing. God even asked Ahaz to choose a sign – any sign he wanted – and God would perform it to assure him of His promise.

But Ahaz was wicked and faithless. He didn't believe God's promise and refused to ask for a sign.

Instead of walking away, God took the initiative. He himself chose a sign – a promise of His care and provision for His people. The sign: a special child would be born. The child's very name would express God's care. It would be "Immanuel," which means "God with us." God promised that before this child was old enough to choose right from wrong, the nations now threatening Judah would be completely destroyed.

This prophecy was probably first fulfilled in a child born at the time. His birth was a sign of God's presence and protection in that situation.

There is much we are not told about this child. But the Bible does tell us, in Matthew 1:23, that this prophecy was fulfilled in a greater way by the coming of Jesus. Jesus had much in common with the "Immanuel" of Isaiah 7:

1. Jesus' birth was shrouded in mystery.
2. Jesus was a sign of God's loving action to deliver His people. He was a living message, a walking signpost assuring everyone that God was in control, and God was keeping His promises.
3. Jesus came, not as a reward for our faith, but entirely at God's initiative, in spite of our unbelief.
4. Jesus' name and His coming brought comfort and assurance: God is with us! Jesus was the fulfillment of God's longstanding promise to His people: "I will be with you always."

In the midst of our trouble, in the face of our unbelief, God has come to us. God's love is a Person. God's gift is Himself: Jesus Christ.

*Father, in Jesus Christ
You have showered on us all Your best gifts,
all that we need for life, peace, and godliness.*

God with Us, Immanuel
(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Holy God, only God,
God Himself is with us!
Glorious One, Lord Most High,
Life and light, power and love,
Our God with us, Immanuel!

Wonderful Counselor,
God Himself is with us!
Prince of Peace, King of Kings,
Boundless Life, Living Word,
Our God with us, Immanuel!

Bow to Him! Worship Him!
God Himself is with us!
Bless the Lord! Lift Him up!
All that is, praise His name,
Our God with us, Immanuel!

Pictures of the Messiah

Read Psalm 72:5, 8; Isaiah 40:9-11; 42:2-4

When we think of Christ at Christmas,
we picture an infant in a manger.

But that is only one small part of
the living, eternal Christ.

The Psalms and the prophets draw many pictures of
all He is and
all He is to us.

He is a king,
a warrior,
a mighty champion,
a priest,
a prophet,
a shepherd, and
a servant who suffers willingly, horribly for His people.

He is the glory of God,
a light to the nations,
the cornerstone chosen and precious.

As you think of Him this Advent and Christmas,
as you celebrate Him,
celebrate all He is and
all He is to you.

Christ Is Come

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Christ is come, our Warrior King,
Mighty Champion great and strong,
Heaven's Prince and Sovereign Son,
Heir to whom all worlds belong.
Lord of Lords
Quick to bless,
All He does is righteousness.
See as now both sin and death
Die beneath His mighty breath.

Christ, the gentle Shepherd, comes.

Lambs all know His tender care.
See them resting in His arms!
Need can never reach them there.
All around,
All within
Love and peace are rich in Him!
Soon His love will overflow,
Giving more than sheep can know.

Christ the Shepherd, Christ the King,
Christ the precious cornerstone,
Christ our high and holy priest,
Christ who suffers for His own,
He who was
And will be,
Light and timeless mystery,
God obeyed and God adored,
Christ our Brother, Christ our Lord!

Hannah

Read 1 Samuel 1:1 – 2:11, 18-21

I read the story of Hannah, and I am struck by the similarities between her and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

- Both bore deep, personal shame regarding child-bearing. Child-bearing was considered the most precious privilege of womanhood. But for each woman, this privilege had turned to utter disgrace. Hannah was childless, and Mary was pregnant outside of marriage.
- In the community and culture in which they lived, their shame was very public and oppressive. Many no doubt considered them cursed by God.
- In reality, their conditions were God's doing, and they bore their suffering in His service. Both women were godly and righteous. Out of their deep, personal shame grew a deep, personal relationship with the Living God.
- Both women were supported by godly husbands.
- When their shame was broken by the gift of a son, each woman expressed her praise to God in exuberant song. Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1-10) seems to have inspired Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). Each exulted in the truth that our loving and just God is wonderfully sovereign in all human affairs.
- Both women knew that their treasured sons, born through such suffering and public shame, actually belonged to God. Each mother consecrated her son back to the Lord.
- Even as children, Samuel and Jesus shared an affinity for God's house, one that shaped their entire lives.

I am moved as I read of Hannah's pain. When praying for a son, she was so distraught that the priest thought she was drunk (1 Samuel 1:12-18). Then as soon as her son was weaned, she left him in Shiloh with the priest Eli, only to see him briefly once a year from then on. We can only imagine the feelings that were flooding this mother's heart.

Such humble godliness is the womb in which each of these great men was nurtured. Seeing Hannah, we get a glimpse of Mary. And seeing the mighty things God did through Samuel, we catch a dim foreshadowing of Jesus Christ.

I Am Your Servant (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

I am Your servant.
I am Your servant.
Whatever pleases You, my Lord.
Watching and praying,
Daily obeying.
Whatever pleases You, my Lord.

Holy Father,
Have Your way.
Lord, I trust You--
Have Your way.
Take it all, Lord--
Have Your way.
In the silence I am yielded.

Shadows of Christ

Romans 5:14 says:

Adam...was a pattern of the one to come. (NIV)

And from Colossians 2:17:

*These are a shadow of the things that were to come;
the reality, however, is found in Christ. (NIV)*

In the Old Testament, not all portraits of the coming Messiah were painted by the words of prophets. Some were painted by the lives of God's people. Living individuals became sign posts pointing us toward Jesus Christ. As we saw God working through them, we caught glimpses of the way He would work through His Son.

Notice how these lives paralleled the coming Messiah

- ADAM was the first of the human race, as Christ is the first of a new, holy humanity. Adam introduced sin. Christ introduced righteousness.
- Like Christ, NOAH pleased God in a time when sin seemed overwhelming and inevitable. Because of him and through him, God saved our race from destruction.
- Like Christ, ABRAHAM trusted God, and through him God created a people uniquely His own. In him all nations on earth were blessed.
- Like Christ, MOSES was God's instrument for leading His people out of bondage. He served as deliverer, leader, prophet, and mediator.
- JOSHUA shared Jesus' own name, and like Him, led God's people into their promised land. ("Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Joshua".)
- Like his Greater Son, DAVID was lifted from humble beginnings to become a glorious leader of God's people. He was a man after God's own heart, and God considered him His own son (Psalm 89:26-27).
- Foreshadowing Jesus Christ, MELCHIZEDEK was a priest of the Most High God by divine appointment, not by birth. His name means, "King of Righteousness". In the Old Testament account he is greater even than Abraham, "without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God" (Hebrews 7:3, NIV).

The Old Testament includes many others whose lives paralleled and pre-figured Christ. Here are just a few:

- ENOCH “walked with God” and left this world without facing death, being taken up directly into God’s presence. (Genesis 5:22-24)
- ISAAC was a long-promised son and heir, miraculously born and later offered up by his father as a sacrifice. (Genesis, chapters 15 and 21 – 22)
- JOSEPH endured betrayal, injustice, and great suffering, then was dramatically exalted to a high position. From that position he saved his family and his entire nation from death. (Genesis, chapters 37 – 50)
- BOAZ willingly accepted responsibility as the kinsman-redeemer of his people and thereby became an ancestor of King David and Jesus Christ. (Ruth, chapters 3 – 4)
- SAMUEL was miraculously born by God’s promise and was wholly dedicated to God’s service before birth. Though not of the priestly tribe, he was God’s chosen mediator between Himself and His people. (1 Samuel)

As we consider these lives and others, we see shadows of the coming Messiah. We catch passing glimpses of how the high and holy God would incarnate Himself in flesh and blood. Their faith and God’s faithfulness to them prepare our hearts for His fullness so beautifully revealed in the Living Christ.

*Father, the human race is like a prism.
Through it we begin to see Your life
exploded into its full range of
color, variety, and dazzling beauty.
Shine through us,
Glorious Father!*

Prepare Us (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Prepare us for the Living Christ.
Prepare us as we listen, Lord.
Our hearts and lives receive Your Word.
Prepare us, Lord.
Prepare us, Lord.

Prepare us as Your temple here.
Prepare us by Your holy breath.
Pour out Your love, Your life, Your death.
Prepare us, Lord.
Prepare us, Lord.

Great God of loving unity,
Our Father, Spirit, Holy Son,
In You we long to live as one.
Prepare us, Lord.
Prepare us, Lord.

You Come to Me

You come
 comforting me,
 forgiving me,
 recreating me,
 giving me a destiny.

You come
 teaching me,
 healing me,
 nourishing me, and
 sharing Yourself with me.

Though infinitely above me, You come to be
 all around me,
 all within me,
 ever before me,
 ever beside me.

Almighty, all-holy, all-loving God,
 You wrap me in Your presence,
enabling me to
 speak and
 live and
 be like You.
Praise to You!

Isaiah 40 (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

You come, the peace of God restored.
You come, the glory of the Lord,
Bathing our world in holy light.
You come, the King in full command
With shepherd's heart and gentle hand.
Praise be to You, Lord Jesus Christ!

Above the world we touch and see
You reign, transcendent deity,
Sovereign and just in all You do.

Leaders and nations far below
Rise up in pride, then quickly go.
All history lifts its eyes to You!

All things are open to Your sight,
Your perfect wisdom, love, and might.
You are Your servants' rich reward!
You come, new power to the weak.
You give Yourself to all who seek,
Jesus, our Life, our Joy, our Lord!

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Christ Has Come!

The Christ of Advent

During Advent, Jesus is the Promise of the Father.

No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.

(2 Corinthians 1:20, NIV)

Think of our God, unlimited by time and place,
all-seeing,
ever-present.

Everywhere and
all eternity are
the domain in which He dwells.

He is complete and
perfect, so
He does not change.

His Word is sovereign.
All reality responds to His will.
He speaks, and it is so.

For this God, His eternal purposes are
certain and
complete.

They are not future possibilities.
They are present reality.

But we are small and fearful,
bound by time,
creatures of the now.

We see only ourselves and
our tiny sliver of all that is.

God's greatest blessings are
too vast,
too broad in time.

We cannot trace His love and
all its magnificent ways.

But our loving Father longs to wrap us in
the beautiful certainty of
all He is and

all He does.
So He makes promises that let us
glimpse His love
beyond our now.
His promises assure us of unchanging truth, that
God will always be who He has always been;
He will always do what He has always done; and
He will complete all He has started.

God's promises are not
empty words,
rosy wishes, or
mere intention.
God's promises describe
eternal reality.

And now, God's promises are
a Person,
a living, human, divine Person
who embodies
all God has done and
all He is doing for His children.

During Advent, look to Jesus.
He is the Promise of the Father.
As He is,
we will be.

Complete in Jesus Christ (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Father, forever blessed,
What a gift is Jesus Christ,
Gift of Your holiness,
All You are in Jesus Christ!
Glory of history,
Love's bright reality,
All, all that life can be –
How You shine in Jesus Christ!

All love desired is done,

A DEEPER CHRISTMAS, p.61

All complete in Jesus Christ.
Eden is re-begun,
Blooming now in Jesus Christ.
He is our re-design,
Human, yet all divine.
God and our flesh combine
Evermore in Jesus Christ.

Grow all He is within –
Father, give us Jesus Christ!
Make us complete in Him,
Living, breathing Jesus Christ,
Fully alive in You,
Love every moment new,
Joy pouring through and through.
Praise to You for Jesus Christ!

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Promises

During Advent we see Jesus, not as flesh and blood reality, but as a promise, a hope, a silhouette of our coming salvation. During Christmas He is still a helpless baby who only does what babies do. Yet even before the human Jesus did anything, simply through His coming, He painted a beautiful portrait of our God:

- This God has worked for millennia to save us from death and bring us back to Himself. His plan was born long before we were, and it will continue until it is completed.
- While we wait for that completion, He encourages and draws us through promises. And He carefully keeps every promise, even when the wait seems endless. Christ's birth proves that God keeps His promises. Be assured that His promised second coming will happen as well.
- God describes Himself in terms we can understand. But no description, no name, no combination of roles does Him justice. He is a King, yet a Servant...a Mighty Warrior, yet a Shepherd. He is both Prophet and Priest...a powerful Lion and a Lamb to be slaughtered. Our God overflows all these descriptions.
- God is also a patient gardener. He loves to grow things! He is growing for us a life that is deep and rich and fruitful beyond our wildest imaginings. But it starts from a tiny seed and must grow slowly and naturally. We have to nurture it. We have to wait for it.
- Beyond all these, first and foremost, our God is a Father.
- This Father dearly loves "ordinary" people. He loves them as His own children.
- God embraces human life from the roots up. This 100% God became 100% human that we might become 100% like Him.

*Father, Your Son came
all the way to where I am
so that He might lead me
all the way to You.
Help me never to neglect
so great a gift!*

The Light of the Living Christ

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

The Light of all the world has come,
Flooding the skies,
Filling our eyes.
Creation greets the Rising Sun
Here in the face of Christ.

Our boundless joy begins tonight,
Coming to birth,
Filling the earth.
Now all the gifts of love unite
Here in the Living Christ.

Into our world where fears divide,
Into our hearts where sorrows hide,
Into our bleak and blinded lives He has come!

This love now guides us on our way,
Making it clear,
Drawing us near,
Till darkness dies in endless day
Here in the face of Christ!

Into our world where fears divide,
Into our hearts where sorrows hide,
Into our bleak and blinded lives He has come!

Our boundless joy begins tonight,
Coming to birth,
Filling the earth.
Now all the gifts of love unite
Here in the Living Christ.

The Word

Read John 1:1-5

Matthew's gospel focuses on showing the Jews that
Jesus is their promised Messiah.
Thus he begins with Jesus' human genealogy,
proving that Jesus descended from King David.

John's gospel focuses on
Jesus' relationship with God,
His Father.
Therefore he begins with Jesus' divine genealogy.
He says:

In the beginning,
the very beginning,
before anything else was,
Jesus was already there with God the Father.
They were two persons but
one life,
one Being,
one God.

Jesus is the Word,
the full and perfect Word,
spoken from the Father's great heart to us.
All that the Father wills,
the Son makes reality.
All that the Father's love imagines,
all the life,
all the light,
all the riches of His own being,
are born in our world and
in us
through Jesus Christ.

*Father, may Jesus Christ be
all that You want Him to be
in my thinking,
my speaking, and
my doing.
I want to be one with You in Him.*

Think, Speak, and Live the Truth

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Lord, flood my thoughts with Your reality,
With all that knowing You is meant to be,
With all the Truth that sets us fully free.
This Truth is Jesus!

Lord, take my words, and keep them kind and true,
A stream of love that flows forever new,
Forever from and through and unto You –
The words of Jesus!

Give me a life that sweetly sings the truth,
That proves Your love and always praises You,
A life that gives You all the glory due –
The life of Jesus!

Soon all but truth will fail and burn away
And all that's hidden face the light of day.
Lord, shine that light throughout my life, I pray –
The light of Jesus!

Unthinkable!

Read John 1:1, 14

Unthinkable!

How could a human being claim to be divine?

Compare us even to this tiny world of ours,
 this grain-of-sand in the universe, and
we are so small,
 so incredibly brief.

A snap of the fingers,
 a puff of air, and
we are gone.

And like a child who invests his few pennies on candy,
 we waste our meager moments on
 “riches” even more shallow and futile than we are.

Blind...arrogant...self-centered...and corrupt.
DIVINE?

Unthinkable!

Try to fully imagine our Sovereign Creator.

“God” is too small a word for Him!

He overflows this sprawling universe
 like an ocean overflows a tea cup.

Would such a Being pour Himself
 undiminished and undiluted
 into our flesh and bone?

All of HIM poured into US?

Would He come here and share
 our helplessness...our grief...our abuse of each other?

Would He come and live His life beside us
 here in the shadow of death?

Unthinkable!

*Imagine moving to the
poorest, least comfortable place on earth and
living among them,
fully sharing their lives,
in order to help them know God.
Christ's sacrifice in the incarnation was
infinitely greater.
But He did it joyfully,
taking on all our humanity in order to
lead us to the Father.*

God Comes

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Come quickly, O God!
We beg and we wait.
Come save from this world
We help to create.
Come, Mighty God—
We cry, we wait.
In sorrow and grief
We can't understand:
Why all this dying and pain from Your loving hand?

But Lord, when You come,
Can any endure
Your all-seeing eye,
So piercing and pure?
Naked, unclean,
Can we endure?
How fierce is Your love,
Your crushing embrace!
Who then can stand when Your presence is face-to-face?

But gently You come,
As soft as a lamb,
An infant, a child,
Exalted I AM
Humble and weak,
A newborn lamb.
O God in our flesh,
Now what should we do?
Helpless, unworthy, in wonder we come to You!

The Uncrossable Gap

God is holy.

We were born into sin.
It is all we have ever known.

God is pure light.

As creatures of the darkness,
we instinctively run from Him.

God is love.

In our selfishness
we are suspicious of Him.

God is Spirit.

To us physical creatures,
He seems unreal.

God is perfect wisdom.

To our ignorance,
He seems foolish.

God is all in all, and He offers Himself to us freely and completely.

In ourselves, we cannot see,
cannot know, and
cannot accept Him.

But now God has crossed all the barriers between Him and us.

The Transcendent One has taken flesh and blood.

Holy God is now and forever
wholly human.

He has come all the way to us in Jesus Christ.

*Father,
You have removed everything that separates
You and me.
I don't want to hold You at arm's length any longer.
Help me to know You and trust You completely.*

You Came to Us

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Fountain of all, great uncreated Light,
Very God, high above!
Sovereign in power, You will the final word,
Boundless life, burning love!
Lord, You laid aside all that God can be
And Your glory hid in simplicity.
In love You came, the Son of Man,
All You are as I am.

Helpless You lay, the undiminished God,
Human child, flesh and bone.
What mighty power could bring all heaven here?
Loving Christ, You alone!
You have shown our race what we all can be,
For Your glory fills our humanity.
I hold this hope, though from so far:
All I am as You are.

Lord, we are one! The earth and heaven join.
All is light! All is new!
All join the dance and shout for holy joy!
We are free now in You!
Life is rich and deep and beyond all time.
Every joy is full, every breath divine.
Your glorious gift is now restored.
Loving Christ, You are Lord!

The I AM

Jesus Christ is *the Word become flesh* (John 1:14).
He is *the image of the invisible God* (Colossians 1:15).
He is *all the fullness of the Deity in bodily form* (Colossians 2:9).
He is *the radiance of the Father's glory and
the exact representation of His very being* (Hebrews 1:3).

Holy God is now human.
The Almighty shares our weakness.
Our Sovereign is a humble servant.
The Unapproachable One grants us unlimited access.
The Transcendent, the Incomprehensible, the Unimaginable
has come to us, and
we see Him face to face.

Mystery and intimacy,
power and dependence,
time and eternity
are seamlessly combined in Him.

The Unknowable is knowable
by childlike faith alone.
The glory of the Infinite God,
of whom the vast universe is only a passing glimpse and a faint whisper,
is fully revealed in this One.

He shares with us
His wisdom,
His heart,
His breath, and
His peace.
He welcomes us with open arms,
holds us gently in His hand,
lovingly speaks our name, and
calls Himself our Brother.

All that the Father has,
all that He is, and
all the gifts of His magnificent Being
are ours forever in this One:
Jesus Christ.

*Holy Father,
in Jesus Christ*

*You have removed all the barriers
between You and me.*

We Can Know Our God Transcendent (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

We can know our God transcendent,
Full, complete in Jesus Christ;
Pure, unbounded, self-existent,
Human now in Jesus Christ!
Overflowing every image,
Filling, flooding space and time,
High and holy, holy, holy,
Friend and Brother, Jesus Christ!

Bread of Life, our Light, our Shepherd,
Great I AM, Lord Jesus Christ!
Living Vine and Door of Heaven,
Life unleashed in Jesus Christ!
He, the Way to God our Father!
Living Truth is all in Him.
Come, receive your resurrection:
Risen, reigning Jesus Christ!

All the Father's gifts and graces
Flow by faith in Jesus Christ.
All He is, His very Being
Fill us in the Living Christ.
Work and worship, rest and wonder,
Know and serve and trust Him now.
Live in rich anticipation:
Soon, completely Jesus Christ!

The Father Shares His Fullness

Luke 11:5-13; Ephesians 3:14-19; Colossians 2:9-10

We parents are weak and limited in so many ways.
Though we love our children,
 there is much we simply do not have and
 thus cannot give them.
Yet we gladly pass on to them whatever we can.
But more importantly, day by day,
 without even thinking about it,
 we share with them all that we are.

Father, You are the perfect parent,
 infinitely greater than all that the best human parent
 can even aspire to be.
All that exists is Yours,
 so there is no limit to what You can give Your children.
You are complete and perfect in Yourself,
 so there is no limit to the gifts and graces You can impart to them.
And You are perfect in love.
 No selfishness ever taints or limits Your giving.
You joyfully, unreservedly share with Your children
 all that You have and
 all that You are.

Almighty God, You share Yourself with us!
You fully incarnated
 Your pure and perfect Son
 in our human flesh
so that through Him,
 we might share in You.
You breathe into us
 Your own Spirit,
 Your own
 holy,
 boundless,
 eternal life
that we might be filled forever with
 all the fullness of God Himself.

Praise to You, magnificent Father,
 infinite in greatness,
 infinite in goodness,
 infinite in love!

Fullness of God

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Fullness of God, Your Spirit, O my Father,
All that You are lives fully in Your Son.
Almighty God incarnate in our weakness,
Holy and human now are fully one.

Fullness of God, Your Spirit, O my Father,
Freely You pour on all who trust Your Son.
Unbounded life You lavish on Your children –
Fullness of joy and heaven here begun.

Fullness of God, Your truth and light and glory,
Unbroken peace, love's length and depth and height,
Transcendent God incarnate in Your people –
O how we long for You, Lord Jesus Christ!

My Holy and Human Brother

Lord Jesus, You bring God within my reach.
You are flesh and blood like me.
You experienced life here as I experience it, in all its
 weakness,
 pain,
 struggle, and
 imperfection.

Yet in You I see the transcendent God,
and in a form I can understand and
 trust.

Almighty, sovereign God is real to me in You.
I can begin to relate to Him in You.

Holiness is also real to me in You.
I would never conceive of holy living,
 never dream of it or
 desire it
until I saw it
 so beautiful and
 desirable

in You.

And as I trust You,
You bring holiness into my
 innermost heart and
 outermost living.

You make *me* holy!
I can hardly even imagine it, and
 yet it is true.

You prove to me that I can be both
 human and
 holy.

You prove to me that I can be a true child of God
 here and now,
 in this present, evil world.

You prove it by Your living example.
You prove it by giving me Your own Holy Spirit
 to live and breathe and desire within me.

And You promise that
 what You have begun,
 You will finish, beautifully and completely.

Praise to You, Jesus,
my holy and human Brother!

*On a human level, "holiness" seems
uncomfortable,
unreasonable, and
unreachable.
But the Spirit of Jesus makes us like Jesus
as we trust Him step by step.
We are holy as we trust Him.*

Holy, Human Jesus Christ (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

One with God and one with man,
Holy, human Jesus Christ!
Helpless infant, Great I Am,
Holy, human Jesus Christ!
Perfect weakness, perfect power,
Sovereign God, our Brother,
Glorious in Your darkest hour,
Holy, human Jesus Christ!

Life eternal born in time,
Holy, human Jesus Christ!
Mighty warrior, peace sublime,
Holy, human Jesus Christ!
Love's response to all who call,
Sovereign God, our Brother!
Helping hand to all who fall,
Holy, human Jesus Christ!

Come, our Lord! We long for You,
Holy, human Jesus Christ,
You, the life our hearts pursue,
Holy, human Jesus Christ!
As You are, we soon will be,
Sovereign God, our Brother,
Rich through Your humanity,
Holy, human Jesus Christ!

Christ in Genesis and Exodus

In Genesis, at the very beginning, when God spoke the universe into existence, Jesus Christ was that sovereign, creative Word. All that the Father willed, the Word brought to reality (Genesis 1; John 1:1-18).

Christ was the deliverer God promised to Adam and Eve. He was their descendant who would crush Satan's head (Genesis 3:15).

Christ was the rainbow's promise to Noah that in the face of overwhelming evil, life would always triumph (Genesis 8:21; 9:8-17).

Christ was the heir promised to Abraham and the sacrifice God provided in place of Isaac (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:4; 22:8, 14).

Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest. Melchizedek and the entire Old Testament priesthood pointed ahead to Him (Genesis 14:17-20; Hebrews 7; 10:19-23).

In the Exodus, Christ was the Passover lamb. Through His blood God's people were saved from death (Exodus 12). Christ was the manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16) and the Bread of the Presence (Exodus 25:30). His life was the completion of the entire sacrificial system and won forgiveness for all our race (Hebrews 10:11-14).

Jesus Christ fulfilled Sinai's law for all of us (Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4). Moses saw the back of God for a few seconds (Exodus 33:18-23; 34:1-7). In Christ we see Him face-to-face and are changed into His glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The Tabernacle in the wilderness feasted our senses on reminders of God's presence (Exodus 40), but Jesus Christ is Himself God's tabernacle among us and within us (John 1:14).

Under the Old Testament law, the transcendent God could not be pictured in physical form, and anyone who tried was guilty of idolatry. But Jesus Christ is "*the image of the invisible God*" (Colossians 1:15) and "*the exact representation of his being*" (Hebrews 1:3, NIV).

In the creation, at Sinai, and in the wilderness, to Adam and Abraham and all God's people, the Father longed to make Himself known and trusted and loved. His desire is fulfilled completely and forever in Jesus Christ, Immanuel, God with Us.

Consider this:

*Why did God wait so long before sending
Jesus Christ,
the final answer for all our needs?
Because we can't understand Him without*

*the law, the history, the Psalms, and the prophets.
They form the necessary backdrop for
all He is and all He has done.*

*Without them, we can't fully receive Him as
the fulfillment of all God's promises and purposes,
as our Sacrifice, our Great High Priest, our Redeemer, and our King.*

Christ in Genesis and Exodus

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Christ the Father's Word is spoken.
Know the great Creator's heart!
See His wonders, taste His graces:
Life and light and holy art,

Refrain

Love beyond what words can tell--
God made flesh, Immanuel!

Christ the warrior, mighty victor,
Comes to crush the serpent's head;
Christ the rainbow, Christ the promise,
Christ the true, eternal bread,

Christ the Son so long awaited,
Blessed seed of Abraham,
Christ the wealth of wisdom's treasure,
Christ the priest and Christ the lamb,

Hear His voice, and see His glory,
Trust His strong and holy hand.
God Himself now tents among us
As we near the promised land.

Christ the Tabernacle

Read Exodus 25 – 30; 36 – 40; John 1:14; 6:48-58; Hebrews 8:1-5

God gave the Old Testament tabernacle so that
our senses, minds, and imaginations
might be permeated with
the glory of His presence.

Jesus Christ is that tabernacle perfected,
its intent completed.

The tabernacle was only a copy.
Jesus is the full presence of God
now living within and among us,
forever uniting heaven and earth.

He is the law of God,
all that is pleasing to the Father,
no longer engraved on stone tablets,
but written on the hearts of His people.

He is the Bread of the Presence,
spreading an eternal feast for all who come.

He is the Light forever burning,
illuminating the whole world.

He is the incense of God's Presence,
the fragrance of His holiness,
the aroma of His unfailing love.

He engulfs us in the richness,
the texture,
the color,
the beauty of heaven itself.

He is the final, perfect sacrifice,
making us right with the Father.

He is the Great High Priest,
uniting us with the Father.

In Christ, the Transcendent God fills
our souls and our senses,
our daily routines and our highest dreams.

Jesus Christ enfolds
all we are in
all He is.

Beyond All Thought (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Beyond all thought -- God;
Above all words -- Wisdom.
Height and depth and simple wonder --
Come and know.

Refrain

He is Father and Creator,
Flesh and blood, our Brother,
Bread of Heaven here within us:
Only Holy God.

Beyond all thought – Love;
Above all words – Goodness.
Life and light and tender mercy –
Come and know.

Jesus' Family

Notice the women mentioned in these excerpts from Matthew 1:1-16:

*A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:
Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was **Tamar**...*

*...Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was **Rahab**,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was **Ruth**,
Obed the father of Jesse,
and Jesse the father of King David.
David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been **Uriah's wife**...*

*...and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of **Mary**,
of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. (NIV)*

For a Jew in biblical times, his genealogy was the leading item on his resume. It was his pedigree, and often it included only men. The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 bends tradition by including five women. And what a colorful lot they were!

Tamar entered Jesus' family tree by seducing her father-in-law.

Rahab was a prostitute. Both she and Ruth were foreigners...outsiders...unclean Gentiles.

The woman called "Uriah's wife" was Bathsheba. She won her place by committing adultery with King David, who then murdered her husband.

And finally, Mary was a teenager who became pregnant before she was married.

Even in his genealogy, Jesus broke down all barriers between us, and between us and God. He embraces us all as His own family if we simply trust Him. *In Him there is no Jew nor Gentile, male nor female. We are all one in Jesus Christ* (Galatians 3:26, 28, para.). Our holy God is proud to call Himself our Brother (Hebrews 2:11, para.).

Family Tree

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

The Son of a virgin,
Of Joseph, it seemed,
Of princes and paupers
And all in-between,
The Heir of a kingdom
We hoped would appear,
The fruit of our failure,
Our weakness and fear,
Our weakness and fear.

The Son of our scandal,
The Child of our shame,
Immersed in our suffering
Though free of all blame,
Transcendent and holy,
Yet humble by birth,
The rich incarnation
Of heaven and earth,
Of heaven and earth.

In Christ we are family,
In Christ we are one,
A joy and a joining
Here only begun.
We praise You, we bless You,
We lift, we adore
Our God and our Brother,
Christ Jesus our Lord,
Christ Jesus our Lord!

The Annunciation

Read Luke 1:26-38

Through His angel, Gabriel, God came to a Jewish teenage girl, just as He had come to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and more. He came making lavish demands and lavish promises. God offered her the privilege of taking part in His timeless plan of salvation.

This girl would become the mother of His Son, so God gave her the clearest picture to date of Who the Child would be:

1. For the first time, we hear His name: Jesus. It's the Greek form of the Hebrew name, "Joshua," which means, "The Lord saves." Matthew 1:21 adds that He would be given that name "because he will save his people from their sins".
2. He would be given the throne of His father David, and He would reign forever. In other words, He would be the Messiah promised by God's prophets for so many centuries, the Deliverer that every faithful Jew eagerly anticipated.
3. He would be the Son of the Most High, of God Himself, but in a fuller way than David or any other king had been. The Holy Spirit, the power of the Most High, would Himself conceive the child. Every other human child receives God's life passed along through uncounted human fathers and human generations. This child would receive God's life directly from Almighty God Himself, with no human male in-between. Any of the Old Testament prophets would have been stunned to receive such a message. Only the Child's mother was told, the girl who would be involved in this marvelous, amazing transaction.

For hundreds of years God had been making promises to His people. He had promised

a Prince,
a Shepherd,
a Healer,
a Conqueror,
a Prophet,
a Priest,
a Lion and a Lamb.

He had promised Peace. He had promised Freedom. He had promised Love and Life without end.

Finally, all the promises were about to be delivered, wrapped together as one magnificent Promise. The Promise was a Baby. The Promise was Immanuel. The Promise was God Himself.

Christmas reminds us of two truths we must never forget:

1. *God is faithful to His promises, generation after generation.*
2. *God brings divine beauty and purity out of our humanity.*

The Promise

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

The Promise is a vision,
A future far away.
The Promise is reality.
The Promise is today.

Refrain

O come embrace the Promise!
O come and live the joy!
O come and love the Living Christ,
Sweet Mary's little boy!

The Promise comes in darkness,
Surprising us at night.
The Promise is surprising Love.
The Promise is our Light.

The Promises are many.
The Promises are one.
The Promises are Jesus Christ.
The Promises have come.

The Promise is great blessing.
The Promise is great wealth.
The Promise is Eternal Life.
The Promise is Himself.

Christmas Is a Story of Joy

*Mary said,
"My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (Luke 1:46-47, NIV)*

Christmas is a story of Joy.
It's a story of wonder,
 of magnificent promises made and kept.
It's a story of faith,
 of love and light and worship,
A story of long journeys and incredible discoveries.

It's a story of kings and angels,
 of shepherds and priests,
 of young and old.
It's a story of beautiful, ordinary people.

But above all, Christmas is a story of Jesus.
When we sing at Christmas,
 we sing about *Him*.
When we celebrate,
 we celebrate *Him*.
When we are happy,
 we are happy because *He* is with us.

Christmas is a story of Joy,
And our Joy is
 Jesus.

Hear the Prophets Talking (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Hear the prophets talking
'Bout a special boy.
Feel the whole world walking
Toward a special joy.
See the promise rising!
Hope's about to find her voice!

He will be our Shepherd;
We will be His sheep.
He will be our Ruler;
Kings bow at His feet.
Our Eternal Father,
Mighty God, the Prince of Peace!

His Kingdom is forever!
Death will come no never!
Peace and justice have no end!
This King will rule the nations!
Love through all creation!
See the lion with the lamb!
He's the Lord, Messiah,
Immanuel, the Great I Am!

Praise to You, Our Father!

Read Luke 1:46-55

Father, as I read Mary's Magnificat,
I hear the joy and praise in her voice.
She realized that the coming of Christ proved that
You are faithful to all Your promises.
Your coming to us in Christ shows that You
are all You say You are and
do all You say You will do.
Praise to You, Father!

Christ's coming displays
Your deep compassion on
all our human weakness and need.

In Christ
You pour out Your grace on the unworthy and
lavish Your mercy on us,
though we don't deserve it.

In the infant Jesus,
Your tenderness becomes flesh and blood.
We can touch You, and
You touch us.

O Holy God,
in Christ we see Your power to
make us like Himself.

In Christ
we sense Your desire for
intimate fellowship with us human creatures.

Father, in Jesus Christ
we see You as You are!
Praise to You!
Praise and glory and thanks to You
forever and ever!

My Soul Exalts You, Lord (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

My soul exalts You, Lord,
Our Father Almighty!
In praise I magnify Your greatness!
With joy I glorify Your name!
Mighty God, Your arm has done great things!
Holy is Your name!
Your mercy reaches to the lowly.
Your love is faithful evermore.
You fill the hungry with Your goodness,
And You bless the hearts that trust Your Word.
My soul exalts You, Lord!

My soul exalts You, Lord,
Our Rock and our Refuge!
For You have come as our salvation,
Our joy, our glory, and our peace.
Mighty God, Your love has done great things!
Holy is Your name!
Your grace is free to all the needy.
Your mercy flows forevermore.
You fill the hungry with Your presence.
You are near to all who trust Your Word.
My soul exalts You, Lord!

Messiah and the Holy Spirit

Seven hundred years before Jesus' birth,
the prophet Isaiah foretold that
Messiah would be a man of the Spirit.

*The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him –
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*
(Isaiah 11:2, NIV)

*“Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him.”*
(Isaiah 42:1, NIV)

*“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.”*
(Isaiah 61:1, NIV)

Not only would Messiah be fully equipped with the Spirit, but
He would pour out that Spirit on all God's people.
Hear the testimony of John the Baptist at Jesus' baptism:

*“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would
not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told
me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will
baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”*
(John 1:32-34, NIV)

Throughout the events of Jesus' birth,
before Jesus even appears,
the Spirit is already doing His work.
First, hear Luke 1:13-15 (NIV):

*The angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard.
Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name
John...He will be filled with the **Holy Spirit** even from birth.”*

Hear also Luke 1:30-35 (NIV):

*The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.
You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name
Jesus...” “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The*

angel answered, “The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”

Listen to what happens when Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth:

*When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the **Holy Spirit**. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear.”*
(Luke 1:41-42, NIV)

The Spirit spoke through Zechariah at the circumcision of John the Baptist:

*[John’s] father Zechariah was filled with the **Holy Spirit** and prophesied: “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.”*
(Luke 1:67-68, NIV)

When Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus to the temple, the Spirit testified to Him through Simeon:

*There was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the **Holy Spirit** was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the **Holy Spirit** that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the **Spirit**, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation.”*
(Luke 2:25-30, NIV)

Later, when Jesus’ earthly ministry was drawing to a close, He would tell His disciples:

“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” (John 15:26; 16:14, NIV)

We see the Spirit already filling that role during Jesus’ birth. He testifies to Jesus through Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, and even through John the Baptist when he is still in his mother’s womb.

In both Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek, the word translated as “spirit” also means “wind” and “breath”. The Spirit is the Wind of God, the Breath of God.

He is God's life and power in motion.
As such, He is the one who plants God's divine life
in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Jesus Christ came in the power of the Spirit,
lived in the power of the Spirit, and
rose in the power of the Spirit.
When He returned to His Father,
He poured out that same Spirit on all believers.
This Spirit is Messiah's gift to all who trust Him.
The Spirit of Christ is your eternal birthright as a child of God.
Live in Him.
Speak in Him.
Minister in Him.
Love in Him.

*Father,
today,
in every situation,
I want the Spirit of Jesus to shape the way
I think, speak, and react.*

God in Christ in Us

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

You clothe Your full transcendence
In rags of flesh and bone,
Your splendor in a vessel of clay.
All our weakness, all Your might
In Christ Jesus now unite,
All You are pouring out through human thoughts, human words,
All Your love pouring out through human hands.

Lord God, Your Holy Spirit
Still fills our flesh and bone.
Your splendor shines in vessels of clay.
All our weakness, all Your might
In Your children now unite,
Jesus Christ pouring out through human thoughts, human words,
All His love pouring out through human hands.

O God, Your holy beauty,

A DEEPER CHRISTMAS, p.91

Your goodness and Your love,
Your rich, undying life shine through me!
By the Spirit of Your Son,
All Your perfect will be done,
Jesus Christ pouring out through all my thoughts and my words,
All His love pouring out through these Your hands.

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Make God Flesh and Blood

What an amazing concept!
Our loving God,
 an infinite Spirit being,
 holy,
 unseen, and
 transcendent,
made Himself a real human being.
He longed for us to know Him.
He wanted us to trust Him.
He wanted to assure us that
 He understood us.
He became like us in every way, sharing
 our existence,
 our life,
 our temptation,
 our pain,
 even our death.
He became like us so that we could become like Him.

That is incarnation:
 God made flesh,
 God become human.
God became incarnate in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is no longer with us in physical form.
But God's deep longing to be incarnate
 has not cooled.
He still burns to be
 seeable and
 touchable.
He still desires to be
 flesh and blood here on this earth,
 among the human beings who need to
 know Him and
 come to Him.
Incarnation is still what He wants.

How can He be incarnate here?
We, His children, His Church,
 are His incarnation.
As soon as Jesus returned to the Father,
 He poured out His own Spirit on all who trusted Him.
By the Spirit of God, we make God
 flesh and blood,

here and now.
We make Him real to needy people.
We are His face,
 His hands,
 His feet,
 His heart.
We are His love,
 His compassion,
 His holiness,
 His peace, and
 His unconquerable joy.

Our wonderful God become
 seeable and
 touchable—
what an amazing possibility!
And each of us and all of us can play a part.

Be the Incarnation

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

God alone, above, transcending,
God beyond all comprehending,
All unseen, the light conceals Him
Till His only Son reveals Him.
Come touch the Holy One,
Human Holy One!

Refrain

See the incarnation!
Be the incarnation!
See the love of God!
Be the love of God!

God divine and human brother,
Flesh and blood like any other,
By the Holy Spirit's power
Giving, living every hour
The mercy of our God,
Holy life of God.

Now in Christ, our human brother,

A DEEPER CHRISTMAS, p.94

We are free to love each other,
By His Holy Spirit's power
Giving, living every hour
The mercy of our God,
Holy life of God.

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The Christ of Christmas

During Christmas, Jesus is the Gift of the Father.
He is all the fullness of God embodied in a human infant.

*A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us...
And His name will be called
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Eternal Father,
Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6, NASB)*

Christmas is the unveiling of
God's greatest promise,
His greatest miracle,
His greatest gift:

His own incarnation.

All He is,
all His purity and perfection,
all His transcendent beauty,
became a human being.

The limitless God became the poorest,
most helpless of all human creatures:
the newborn infant of an
unmarried peasant girl.

Look! Here is the gift of Christmas.
Here is the wonder of Christmas.
Here are all the most precious treasures,
poured out on all who will receive them.

Here are holiness,
wisdom, and
boundless joy,
wholeness,
harmony, and
complete well-being.

Here are unity and
individuality,
eternal belonging and
a glorious destiny.

During Christmas, receive
the Gift of the Father,
the life of the Father, and
the love of the Father.
Receive Jesus Christ by simple faith.

I Have the Truth

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

I have the truth, so clear and lovely,
Lighting my heart and mind and soul.
I have the truth, so clear and lovely.
This truth, this light is Jesus.
This truth, this light is Jesus.

I have a joy and hope unfailing
Warming my heart and mind and soul.
I have a joy and hope unfailing.
This hope, this joy is Jesus.
This hope, this joy is Jesus.

Simple, natural, personal,
Rich and real and every day!
All I've ever wanted or wished for
Has a face and the touch of a Friend!

I have a life and love unending
Filling my heart and mind and soul.
I have a life and love unending.
This love, this life is Jesus.
This truth, this joy is Jesus.

Christmas Is a Story of Faith

Read Luke 2:1-5

Christmas is a story of faith.
It's a story of
 hardship and sacrifice,
 of long journeys and years of waiting.

Mary, perhaps 14 years old,
endured the terrible shame of
 being pregnant before she was married.
After traveling 80 miles to Bethlehem,
 no doubt exhausted and frightened,
 far from family and home,
she had her first child
 in the dirt and darkness
 of a stable.

Joseph stayed by her side,
 though the child was not his own.
He willingly shared her shame
 and her suffering.

Mary, Joseph, and many others
followed God through long, difficult days.
But because they were faithful,
they saw Him
 and rejoiced in Him
 and became part of His timeless story.

Christmas is a story of faith,
and we too are called to be faithful.
We too can be part of the timeless story of
 Jesus.

*Our lives play an important part in
a purpose that is much greater than we can imagine.
We will influence precious people, both present and future.
Father, help us to stay faithful in the place You have put us.*

Walking by Faith (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Weary and troubled with so much uncertain,
Helpless and homeless and so far away,
Struggling to care for an infant so precious;
All they could give was a cradle of hay.
Savior, O Savior, we're tired and we're troubled.
Humbly we offer this cradle of hay.

Daily, so daily, through years and through trials,
Often uncertain with hope far away,
Walking by faith in the One who is faithful,
God was their strength in the day after day.
Savior, O Savior, through years and through trials,
Come, be our strength in the day after day.

Jesus, You came from the glories of heaven,
Taking our weakness and struggle and shame,
Walking by faith in the One who is faithful,
Dying in silence, You carried our pain.
Savior, O Savior, now gladly we follow,
Taking Your cross and Your struggle and shame.
Walking by faith in the One who is faithful,
Finding You strong in the day after day.
Walking by faith in the One who is faithful;
Lord, You are strong in the day after day.

Share in Christ

Consider the people nearest to Jesus during His life on earth:

His mother,
His father,
His disciples.

Those closest to Him shared His sufferings.
In their own degree, they bore what Jesus bore.
Their relationship with that one man cost them everything.

For them, the mysteries of the transcendent God weren't abstract and far away.
They witnessed those mysteries close up.
They tasted them.
They journeyed through them.
They wrestled with them daily –
the light, the darkness,
the privilege, the pain,
the waiting, the questions, the wrenching self-sacrifice.

For each, it started with a personal call.
They sensed it was the call of the Living God,
and that decided their response,
though they couldn't see the end from the beginning.
Mary answered the angel,
"I am the Lord's servant... May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38, NIV).
Joseph obeyed a dream and took a pregnant woman as his fiancé.
The disciples, average working men with deep local connections,
dropped everything familiar and
followed a homeless, itinerant teacher.

The price was real,
but the result was life rich beyond imagination,
permeated with truth and peace,
love and fruitfulness,
eternal meaning and undying glory.
That is still the price and the reward for all who share in Christ.

*An unwanted decree from an unfriendly government,
a long, difficult journey with
a shameful pregnancy,
lousy accommodations,
a painful labor in tough circumstances, and
only a feeding trough for a cradle –
yet through all these God was
blessing the entire world.
What unpleasant circumstances is He using in your life?*

Partners in the Mystery (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

What a blessing God has sent!
Now, before the wedding,
Virgin Mary, good and pure,
Suddenly expecting;
Friends and family all upset,
Joseph disillusioned.
Still they trust the guiding Word
Through their dark confusion.

See the tender Mary there –
Like so many others,
Young and scared and all alone,
Soon to be a mother.
Into darkness, into pain,
Unto death is given
Such a tiny precious life,
Such a gift from heaven.

In the temple, what a sight!
After years of waiting,
Now before his very eyes
There the Promised Baby!
There the Light of all the world!
There for all the nations,
Sleeping in his folded arms,
Heaven's sweet salvation!

What a privilege! What a call!
Partners in the mystery!
We who walk by faith become
Part of holy history.
Rich and poor, the young and old,
Fill the timeless story.
All who boldly follow God
See and share His glory.

Christmas Is the Story of a Baby

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

(Luke 2:6-7, NIV)

Christmas is the story of a Baby—

a tiny,
crying,
cute little Baby.

Instead of diapers,
He was wrapped tightly in “swaddling clothes”,
strips of cloth to keep his limbs warm and straight.

Instead of a cradle,
He was laid in a manger—
a feeding trough for animals.

He had no other place to sleep.

Why would God leave
the beauty,
the peace, and
the happiness of heaven

to become a
poor,
weak,
helpless Infant?

Why would He lay aside
the glory of all He was and
take upon Himself the simplicity of a child?

He came to be close to us,
to touch us,
to become like us
so that we could become like Him.

He came because He loved us.

Christmas is the story of a Baby,
a beautiful,
heavenly,
human little Baby;
and the Baby was
Jesus.

The Light Is Born (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Night, so far from home,
Just two alone in their need.
Nine months of shame,
Now growing pain
And desperation for relief.
They need a place,
Some simple place.
Her time has come,
It has begun,
And now a cry
Rings out to pierce the darkness.

Look, new life is here,
And God is near in this night.
Just see the child,
The tiny child,
And share in heaven's pure delight.
Look how they come,
The needy come
From every race.
On every face
His life will shine,
Dispelling all our darkness.

Come, see Jesus Christ
And find the Light of the World!

Still He Comes

We were rebels against God,
determined to be our own lords,
willfully ignorant of Him.
It seems logical that He would come to us
with a show of power,
to warn us into submission.

Instead, He came gently.
He came in love,
sharing our darkness and distress.
He came, not to force us to submit,
but to lovingly invite us to Himself.

In that very same way He still comes to each of us personally.
He comes gently.
He comes in love.
He comes inviting us to know Him and trust Him.

Still He Comes

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Still He comes in darkest night,
Still so gentle, God of Might.
Hear no thunder –
Quiet wonder;
Darkness is dying
In love's pure light.

See Him share our deep distress,
Bearing still our brokenness,
Hearts revealing,
Wounding, healing.
Love bruised and bleeding
Has come to bless.

Find Him still a fruitful vine
Turning water into wine;
Great Creator,
Gracious Savior

Growing within us
His life divine.

Joy beyond what words can tell:
Christ is here, and all is well!
See Him standing,
All commanding –
God ever with us,
Emmanuel!

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Our King

David had been the most powerful,
most commanding,
most “successful” king Israel had ever had.
And the Messiah was promised to be
a greater heir to
David’s glorious throne.

But Jesus arrived as the seemingly-illegitimate son of peasants,
with a filthy stable for a nursery and
a feeding trough His only cradle.
He entered this world sharing
the misery,
the poverty,
the shame, and
the oppression of His people.

Maybe that’s how a king *should* come.

His riches would be the Spirit of Almighty God.
His power would be the unrestrainable love of our Father Creator.
His most sweeping victory would be His death, and
His greatest gift to His people would be
Himself.

He has come!
Receive Him now,
the King of all Kings and
the Lord of all Lords!

Infinite Lord

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Infinite Lord, my Infant King,
Throned in humility;
Your only robes – Your swaddling clothes;
Crying -- Your first decree;
Your grand domain, Your crown and train –
Darkness and dust and sheep.

Jesus, in dust and hay I kneel,
Stabled in deepest need;
My only robes --Your righteousness;
"Mercy" -- my only plea;
My light -- Your gaze; My song – Your praise;
My hope and prayer--Your peace.

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Free, Fearless, and Complete

*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself.
(Philippians 2:5-8, NIV)*

We humans spend much of our time and energy trying to look as good as possible in the eyes of other people. Our appearance, the way we carry ourselves, the things we say, and the way we say them are often calculated to maximize our respect in the eyes of others...and perhaps to maximize our respect for ourselves.

When God came as a human being, He didn't puff Himself up. He humbled Himself. He intentionally made Himself far less than He was.

We humans are not so confident. We resist giving ourselves and our resources too completely. Our love is limited by fear. We fear vulnerability. We fear giving away too much and leaving ourselves with too little.

Almighty God has no such fear. He has no need. All that is flows from Him. He is complete and all-encompassing, all-sufficient in Himself. He is full and overflows with love. Giving is His nature, His delight.

When God came, He gave Himself without holding anything back. He willingly took upon Himself our lowliness, our weakness, and our poverty so that we could share His completeness. He made Himself like us in order that we might be like Him.

Because He came, we too can be thoroughly human, yet free, fearless, and complete by trusting our almighty, all-giving God. We can live and love as fully as He does.
Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15, NIV)

*Father,
Your Son gave up everything to
come to us:
His comfort,
His status,
His glory, and
His life.
Help me to give what little I have to
that same cause:
the salvation of our race.*

Startled by Your Lowliness

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Startled by Your lowliness,
Puzzled by Your helplessness:
Peasant mother, dingy stable,
Shame and filth and need.
Poorest of the poor You came,
Born in darkness, fear, and pain,
You were Lord Creator,
But we never gave You room.

God, I never knew You, and
I didn't really care –
Someone so untouchable
And far beyond my prayer.
Then You came to where I was,
And Lord, how can it be –
All I did was trust You, and
My God was born in me!

See the world as when You came,
Caught in darkness, fear, and pain.
Children born in deepest need
Still die without a name.
Jesus, do You love them now?
Come, O God, and show me how!
Take again this flesh and blood, and
Touch the world through me!

Christmas Is a Story of Light

There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.
(Luke 2:8-9; Isaiah 9:2; 60:1; NIV)

Christmas is a story of Light.
In the beginning, God said,
 "Let there be light!"
And there was light.

When His Son was born into the world,
God said,
 "Let there be light!"
And the glory of heaven
flooded the night sky.

When God enters our hearts,
He says,
 "Let there be light!"
And He fills us with the
 warmth and glow of His presence.

That's why we celebrate Christmas
by hanging beautiful lights all around us:
Because the Light has come
 into our world and
 into our hearts.

Christmas is a story of Light,
and the Light of the World is
 Jesus.

Jesus, the Light of the World

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

See the Bright and Morning Star,
Jesus, the Light of the World!
He has risen in our hearts,
Jesus, the Light of the World!

Refrain

Walk in the Light, beautiful Light;
Come where His love and His mercy are bright.
Shine all around us by day and by night,
Jesus, the Light of the World.

He's the Lamp that lights our way,
Jesus, the Light of the World!
Step by step and day by day --
Jesus, the Light of the World!

No more darkness, no more night --
Jesus, the Light of the World!
He will shine forever bright,
Jesus, the Light of the World!

Mysterious Wonders

There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:8-12, NIV)

Imagine the mysterious wonders of that
first Christmas night.

A world-changing event,
foretold for centuries,
was actually happening, and
only a handful of the commonest people knew it.

God Himself was becoming
flesh and blood,
arriving as the most helpless of creatures:
a human infant.

This child had been conceived by
an infinite spirit being and
a young virgin, probably a teenage girl.

Imagine what the shepherds
saw and
heard and
felt.

In the blackness of a silent night
in the open fields,
suddenly a blazing light,
a stunning message, and
a sky full of angels.

But how would the shepherds recognize this
"Savior...Christ the Lord"?
What would make Him unique?
It would be His shocking lowliness and poverty.
They would find an infant,
wrapped up like a newborn,
lying in a feeding trough.

Imagine yourself a shepherd,
on the ground,
gazing out into the blackness,
hearing only the night sounds.

The Shepherd's Carol (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

The night was dark, the wind was cold,
Our well of hope was dry
When He the Mighty Spirit came
From far beyond the sky.
We woke, and light was everywhere,
And holy music filled the air:

Refrain

Gloria!
Gloria!
Lift up your hearts,
For the King of Love is come.

We entered in a stable dark,
And there upon some hay,
Surrounded by the animals,
The Great Creator lay.
I saw no glowing seraphim,
But in my heart I heard the hymn:

Come kneel with us, you humble ones;
O come from every land.
He gives Himself to lowly hearts
And rough and rugged hands.
The journey here is never far,
For God has come to where we are.

A Multitude of Angels

In both the Old and New Testaments, the words translated “angel” literally mean “messenger”. Many times God sent individual angels to deliver His message to selected persons on earth: to Hagar (Genesis 16:7-12), Abraham (Genesis 22:11-18), Moses (Exodus 3:2), Gideon (Judges 6:11-12), Zechariah (Luke 1:11-20), Mary (Luke 1:26-38), and many more.

On the other hand, visions of heaven speak of multitudes of angels. These multitudes appear in the visions of the prophets Micaiah (1 Kings 22:19) and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-4) and in John’s visions recorded in Revelation (5:8-14; 7:11-12). These angels are shown serving God through obedience and praise.

But I know of only once when God sent a message to earth, not through an individual angel alone, but through a multitude of angels. This multitude was sent to announce an event that would be the turning point of all history. At that moment they would bring the praise and glory of heaven down to earth.

It was night. The place was the sky over an open field outside a small village on the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Only a handful of shepherds saw and heard this one-time appearance:

*Suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,
“Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”*
(Luke 2:13-14, NASB)

The event they announced had been whispered since the beginning of human history. This event was a Gift, prophesied for centuries by God’s seers. They had spoken in common images of a Child, a Shepherd, a Servant, a Warrior, and a King who would somehow be beyond all titles, all descriptions, and all imaginings. This Gift was a coming, a personal arrival, and on that ordinary, extraordinary night, the arrival was now:

Transcendent God had taken flesh and blood.
Holy God was, now and forever, wholly human.

Heaven itself had come to earth. The One who had sat on the throne was now an infant lying in a feeding trough. But for just a few moments that night, He brought His throne-room choir with Him.

Rejoice in His Coming (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Rejoice in His coming, all people of earth!
Be glad in your King on the day of His birth!
Bow down to the One all creation obeys!
Lift up the Lord Jesus, and crown Him with praise!

The glory of heaven now lights up the sky
With news of great joy from our Father on high.
Tonight He has given a Savior, a Son!
The angels all gather and worship as one.

A star is proclaiming the place of His birth,
And wise men draw near from the ends of the earth.
In wonder we watch as their treasures unfold.
They worship with myrrh and with incense and gold.

Come, shepherds and angels, the great and the small,
Let's gather and kneel to the Lord of us all,
Messiah, our Shepherd, our glory, our light.
All praise in the highest to You, Jesus Christ!

Christmas Is a Story of Love

*Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel,
praising God and saying,
"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."
(Luke 2:13-14, NIV)*

*Love comes from God...
God is love...
For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life.
(1 John 4:7, 8; John 3:16, NIV)*

Christmas is a story of Love.
For hundreds of years,
Love had whispered,
 "I am coming!
I am coming to be with you,
to stay with you forever!"

It was Love that celebrated that night
in the skies over Bethlehem with
 angels,
 music, and
 shouts of praise.

Love was the shining star
high in the sky,
sent to draw people from far away
to come and worship the Baby.

And Love has entered our hearts.
We can feel it drawing us
 to love and worship God.
We can see it gathering us together
 to celebrate His coming.
And we can sense it reaching out this Christmas
to share with the needy all around us.

Christmas is a story of Love,
Love that has come to us,
Love that has brightened our lives;
and Love is
 Jesus.

*Father,
Your love is the force that powers the universe.
May it power my life as well.*

Love Has Come! (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Love has come – a light in the darkness!
Love explodes in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it.
Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high!

Love is born! Come share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of His mother.
What is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers.
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

Love has come – He never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love! Praise to You, God on high!

More Loving

This Christmas, Father, help me to be more loving.
Reshape me by the Spirit of Christ.
Make me more like You.

Add or subtract from me.
Edit and revise me as You see fit.
Tune me up, Lord.
Challenge me,
 teach me,
 inspire me by Your example.

I am listening, Father.
Lead, and I will follow.

Open my eyes to the needs all around me.
Help me to see You standing among us,
 eager to supply each need from Your great abundance.

This Christmas,
 make me as humble as the newborn Christ.
Keep me as patient as You, my Father,
 and as faithful as Your unfailing promises.
Help me to share the good news about Jesus
 as naturally and eagerly as the shepherds.
With the magi, may I bow in worship and
 offer You only my very best.

Bring your love to life,
 O kind, compassionate Father.
Make it flesh and blood in me.

Christmas Love

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
Come share Your heart, we pray.
Cast out all fear and enter here.
Be love in us today.
Your gentleness, Lord Jesus,
Has drawn our thoughts above.
Now come to us and live through us
With all Your warmth and love.

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Everyone Is Invited!

Read Luke 2:15-20

The following reflection is based on a sermon by John Chrysostom, reportedly from the first Christmas sermon ever preached, 386 A.D.

Jesus Christ has come!
God is now on earth!
Humanity now rules in heaven!

The hope of all nations is here!
Come, everyone!
Gather and celebrate!

Kings have come that they might
 bow to the King of Kings.
Soldiers have come that they might
 serve the Lord of all the armies of heaven.
Women have come that they might
 adore Him Who was born of a woman.
Children gather round to
 see the God who has become a child.
Shepherds leave their flocks to
 come and know the Good Shepherd.
Priests come to
 worship our Great High Priest.
Wise men have journeyed from the ends of the earth
 to wonder at the source of all wisdom.
Servants kneel to the Lord of Lords who
 made Himself a servant like them.
Sinners draw near to the holy God who
 gladly calls Himself their Friend.

*Jesus Christ is the Father's good news
 for every human being.
In Christ, God stands in the public square and shouts,
 "I love you!
 I forgive you!
 Just trust Me, and
 you will live deeply,
 freely, and
 forever!"*

Christ the Lord Is with Us! (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

The welcome call goes out to all –
The young may come,
The old may come.
The rich, the poor, we all may come,
For Christ the Lord is with us!

Refrain

Jesus! Jesus!
God on earth! Man in heaven!
Jesus! Jesus!
Glory to God in the highest!

Forever God, forever man!
The promise comes!
Our heaven comes!
Now love completes what love began,
For Christ the Lord is with us!

The high, the low are all His own.
You doubters, come!
You guilty, come!
The holy life is flesh and bone,
For Christ the Lord is with us!

Christmas Is for Everyone!

Christmas is for everyone!
God's great Gift is given to each of us
and to all of us.

Jesus Christ is the Savior of
our entire race—
not just *our* nation or
our religion.

Culture doesn't matter.
Education doesn't matter.
Age doesn't matter.
Money doesn't matter.
Every human being can have a
rich,
full,
satisfying life,
now and forever,
by simply trusting
Jesus Christ.

God wants everyone to know!

The Lord Has Come!

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Fill the world with celebration!
Spread the news: our Hope has come!
Every heart and every nation,
Come and see: our Peace has come!
Hear the song so long awaited:
Everlasting Joy has come!
Find the life your God created.
What a gift! His Love has come!

God Himself in flesh is given.
He is here! The Lord has come!
See the Light of holy heaven!
Lift your eyes! The Lord has come!
Join us here — we all can know Him.

Life and Joy, the Lord has come!
Let us bring the praise we owe Him.
Jesus Christ our Lord has come!

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Stumbling Block or Cornerstone?

Hear the prophets foretell Christ the cornerstone:

He will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.
(Isaiah 8:14, NIV)

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this. (Psalm 118:22-23, NIV)

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone . . . a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed." (Isaiah 28:16, NIV)

Luke 2:21-35 tells us the story of Simeon. He was an old man, righteous and good, who greatly longed for the coming of the Messiah. God had promised him that before he died, he would see this Messiah with his own eyes.

On this particular day, the Spirit of God had led him into the Temple. When Mary and Joseph brought in the infant Jesus to be circumcised, Simeon knew this Child was the One. He took the Baby Jesus in his arms, praised God for His coming, and blessed Mary and Joseph. He went on to tell them:

"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35, NIV).

Simeon was affirming what the Old Testament prophets had said about the Christ. To some, He would be a stumbling block. To others, He would be a cornerstone. The Messiah would be controversial. He himself would serve as a dividing line. Those who rejected Him would fall. Those who accepted Him would find life and deliverance in Him. There would be no middle ground.

We see that sharp division throughout Jesus' earthly ministry. His life was framed with it.

Read the story of the wise men in Matthew 2:1-12. Earthly leaders were afraid of His authority and tried to destroy Him. His own people expected a different kind of Messiah. They met Him with apathy, fear, or opposition. But those from far away, those who seemed the least likely to have any interest in Him, somehow recognized that He was a great King, worthy of worship.

Look at His crucifixion, and you'll see the same picture. Jealous leaders tried to destroy Him. His own people were apathetic or antagonistic. But a rough Roman soldier, sent there to crucify Him, recognized Him as the Son of God.

Why the sharp division? Jesus said of Himself what the Scriptures said about Him: He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 26:63-64). He is the Maker and Ruler of all (Colossians 1:15-19). He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16). At His name every knee will one day bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

Such claims leave no middle ground. No one can stay neutral. When we encounter Jesus, we will react to Him. We will decide for ourselves who He is. Those who don't recognize and accept Him as Lord have rejected Him. To them, He becomes a stumbling block, One who causes them to fall.

To those who accept Him as Lord of their lives, He is the Cornerstone. He brings shape, stability, and unity to all of life.

Like the wise men, like so many millions down through the ages, rich and poor, young and old, great and humble, recognize Him as Your Creator, as Lord of your life. Come to Him. Discover Him. Worship Him: Jesus Christ.

Image of the Unseen God

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Image of the unseen God –
Jesus! Jesus!
Truth and Love and Living Word –
Jesus! Jesus!
Fullness of unbounded glory!
Hope and song and timeless story
Shine their light on You alone,
Jesus! Jesus!

From and through and unto You,
Jesus! Jesus!
Life is flowing ever new,
Jesus! Jesus!
Source and goal of all creation!
Here we join the grand ovation
Swelling, rising up to You,
Jesus! Jesus!

King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
Jesus! Jesus!
Death and sin and pain no more,

Jesus! Jesus!
What a mighty resurrection!
We Your Bride in Your perfection
One with You forevermore,
Jesus! Jesus!

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A Voice in the Wilderness

Read Luke 3:1-6

While most people,
 even God's people,
were preoccupied with the world's celebrities,
God's living, sovereign, creative word
 was coming to a man alone in the desert.

He had none of the world's
 soft clothing,
 soft ways, or
 soft words.

Everything about him was
 raw and
 real.

He was a voice crying in the wilderness,
 in the world's wildest, most untamed place.
God had met His people there before.
He had led them through this desert for forty years,
 teaching them,
 confronting them,
 purifying them,
 drawing them to Himself.

He had isolated them from
 every other comfort and
 every other source of supply,
to show them that He alone was
 their bread,
 their security,
 their truth,
 their God.

Now, through this Baptizer, He was calling them again.
He was calling them back out to the wilderness,
back out to die to their sins and rise to
 new life,
 untamed life,
 pure and all-sufficient life in Himself alone.

Go to the Wilderness!

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Go to the wilderness!
Hear the voice of God!
His servant speaks the truth untamed,
And not for your applause.
His look is rough and unrefined.
His ways are raw and wild,
And through the fury of his words
God calls to you, His child.

Go to the wilderness!
Go confront your sin.
The Word that brings a storm of guilt
Will speak His peace within.
Confess the truth your heart has heard.
Repent and start to live.
The mercy that condemns your sin
Is longing to forgive.

Come to the wilderness!
Trust your God alone.
His mighty breath can fill your life
With life beyond your own.
So come and live the truth untamed!
Begin your life again,
For here you meet the Sovereign God
As Father and as Friend.

Look!

Read John 1:29-34

Hear the voice of John the Baptist,
calling to you from the wilderness,
pointing you to the Coming One, Jesus Christ:

“Look!
Here comes the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

“Look!
The Son of God steps out of eternity
to let you know your Father face to face.

“Look!
Jesus comes to immerse our hearts and lives,
not just in water,
but in the Spirit of God Himself.”

As Jesus comes to *you*
offering such rich gifts,
how will you receive Him?

Christ Is Coming! Lift Your Eyes!

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Christ is coming! Lift your eyes!
Sweep your hearts, prepare your lives.
Spread your welcome. He is near.
Soon Messiah will appear!
He is life and peace profound.
Trust His love and turn around!
Christ is coming! Don't delay!
He is Lord! Prepare His way!

Wash your hearts, confess your sin.
See your heaven now begin.
Look beyond your fear and pride.
See His Kingdom open wide.
Meet the Lord of sky and sea,
God in full reality!

Christ is coming! Don't delay!
He is Lord! Prepare His way!

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Epiphany: The Light of the World

The Light of the World

Read Luke 2:22-32

Jesus is not just the central figure of Christianity.

He is the central figure of all history,
of earth and heaven.

He is the Creator, the Sustainer of all that is,
seen and unseen,
the Sovereign Word of the Sovereign God.

He is not just the wisest person who ever lived.

In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

He is not just the leader of one group,
culture, or
movement.

He is the King of all Kings and
the Lord of all Lords.

Isaiah said:

*“See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.” (Isaiah 60:2, NIV)*

Jesus is the Light of the World, and
as He is lifted up,
all nations, all peoples will come to Him.

*We know what the holy and wise of all ages
have longed to discover.
We see Jesus Christ.
How very blessed we are!*

Light of Every Nation (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

God's children come from far and near,
Come to kneel in worship.
The dawning of His reign is here.
See them come and worship!

Refrain

Jesus! Jesus!
Light of every nation!
Every knee will bow to You,
Lord of all creation!

He shatters all the chains that bind.
Glory in the highest!
Now life is rich and unconfined.
Glory in the highest!

See justice like a mighty stream!
God Himself is with us!
Now love and goodness reign supreme.
God Himself is with us!

The Christ of Epiphany

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. (Isaiah 9:2, NIV)

During Epiphany, Jesus is the Light of the Father,
drawing all people to Himself.

*Arise, shine; for your light has come,
And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness will cover the earth
And deep darkness the peoples;
But the Lord will rise upon you
And His glory will appear upon you.
Nations will come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3, NASB)*

Among the very first people to be told of Messiah's coming,
among His very first worshipers,
were visitors from a far away land and a different religion.
Jesus did not come as just
the Jewish Messiah or
the Christian Savior,
but as the Light of the World.

*I will also make You a light of the nations
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth. (Isaiah 49:6, NASB)*

Jesus is the knowledge of our universal God shining out to
every people and culture, to
every individual, for
every human need.

He is understanding in our profound ignorance.
He is wisdom in our foolishness.
He is God's glory in our darkness and shame.
He is pure,
beautiful,
living truth.

During Epiphany, Jesus is the Light of the Father.
Come to the Light.
Walk in the Light.
Lift the light so that
all can see Him for all He is.

God Is Light (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

God is light. We all can know Him.
All can see His face in Christ,
In His voice hear heaven's wisdom,
See God smile in human eyes,
Feel His power, taste His mercy,
Find a love that bleeds and dies,
Find a love that bleeds and dies.

God is light. We share His glory
As we live and love in Him.
We can walk in holy freedom
As He lives and grows within.
Lay aside your deeds of darkness.
Let eternal day begin!
Let eternal day begin!

God is light. Display His beauty!
Live a kindness all divine.
Prove His grace to all around you.
Love is still His seal and sign.
Share forgiveness. Show compassion.
Live His goodness! Let it shine!
Live His goodness! Let it shine!

Christmas Is the Story of a King

Read Matthew 2:1-6

Christmas is the story of a King.

When the King was born,
 Caesar Augustus was Emperor of Rome.
He ruled the world
 with great power and
 vast military might.
But he died in 14 A.D.,
 and his kingdom passed to another.

Herod the Great was King of Judea.
He ruled with
 violence and
 cruel jealousy.
He tried to kill the Child King.
The Child lived,
 but Herod died,
 and his power died with him.

The Child King was
 Lord of the Universe,
 Almighty God.
He ruled
 with humility and self-sacrifice,
 with love and forgiveness.
He faced death
 and destroyed it.
His Kingdom will never end.

Christmas is the story of a King,
and our King forever is
 Jesus.

Now unto Us a Child Is Born (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Now unto us a Child is born,
To us a Son is given.
Now unto us a Child is born,
To us a Son is given.
How wonderful His holy name!
Let heaven sing and earth proclaim:
Now unto us a Child is born,
To us a Son is given.

O Prince of Peace, O Prince of Peace,
The Lord of all creation!
O Prince of Peace, O Prince of Peace,
The Lord of all creation!
All nations join to greet Your birth.
Your Kingdom come and fill the earth!
O Prince of Peace, O Prince of Peace,
The Lord of all creation!

O Son of God, O Son of God,
We worship You, Lord Jesus.
O Son of God, O Son of God,
We worship You, Lord Jesus.
How wonderful Your holy name!
Let heaven sing and earth proclaim:
O Son of God, O Son of God,
We worship You, Lord Jesus.

The Star

God made the stars to bring light to the darkness.
To us, their physical light may seem small.
But the enlightenment they bring is beyond expressing.
These distant, burning suns
 eloquently,
 constantly
remind us of a God who is
 limitless,
 loving,
 changeless, and
 magnificent,
beyond our imagination.

So when His Son came to earth, our Creator God prepared a
 special star for this
 special revelation of Himself.
That star silently announced
that our Magnificent God was now
 living among us, and
 we could know Him
 face-to-face.

The star began to gather all nations to worship
 their King of Kings and
 Lord of Lords.

Now this Christ is Himself our
 Bright Morning Star.
He Himself is God's special revelation of His
 faithfulness and
 love.

He is the star that rises in the east
 just before sunrise,
 when the night seems blackest,
announcing that
 our long wait is almost over, and
 a new, eternal day is about to dawn.

Praise to You,
 Bright Morning Star!
O come to us,
 Lord Jesus!

Star Hymn (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

The stars that flood the sky
In silence glorify
You, the One who gave the light.
Praise! Praise!
How they gild the darkest night!
Changeless, yet forever new,
O Father God, they sing of You:
Greatness all above!
Faithfulness and love!

Your star lit up the sky
Your Son to glorify.
He came down to banish night.
Praise! Praise!
Christ the everlasting light!
Now You call to every race
To meet their Sovereign face-to-face –
Greatness all above!
Faithfulness and love!

Now Christ the Morning Star
Brings hope to where we are,
Promising the coming light –
Joy, joy
Piercing through the darkest night.
Soon He'll gather every race
To join You, Father, face-to-face –
Glorious God above!
Life and light and love!

Christmas Is the Story of a Star

Read Matthew 2:7-10

Christmas is the story of a Star.
The wise men had studied the stars for years, but suddenly,
One Star
caused them to leave home
 on a long journey,
 traveling many difficult months.
That One Star
was a sign from heaven,
and they followed.

One Star
was their only guide
all the way from a distant country
 through so much desert
 and so many midnights.
One Star
led them to
 a simple house
 in the tiny village of
 far-away Bethlehem.

One Star.

Christmas is the story of a Star.
The story reminds us that
God never leaves us alone.
Even in the blackest night,
He always sends
One Star.
And our Star is
 Jesus.

*Father,
through all this darkness,
Jesus is the Light leading us to You.
I will walk in Him step by step.*

The March of the Three Wise Men (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Three wise men, inspired by a star,
Prepared great offerings of precious treasures.
Three wise men, inspired by a star,
With joy began a journey long and hard.
The star so radiant proclaimed a birth:
A King was born, the greatest of the earth.
Through desert sands, through Jerusalem,
They pressed on eagerly to worship Him.

Three wise men, led only by a star,
Arrived where now the newborn King was lying.
Three wise men, led only by a star,
Had found the hope of every longing heart:
The Lord of all with an infant's cry,
A holy child, the Son of the Most High.
Come, let us follow and enter in.
Come, let us bow in awe and worship Him.

Christmas Is a Story of Worship

On coming to the house, [the Magi] saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. (Matthew 2:11, NIV)

Christmas is a story of worship.

The scriptures say that
the heavens sing of God's glory,
and the earth tells of
the wonderful things He does.

Jesus said that if God's people are silent,
the rocks themselves will cry out and
praise Him.

When the shepherds heard that
the Promised One had come,
they ran to Bethlehem and
worshiped the Child.

When the wise men knew that
He was born,
distance could not keep them away.
They came and brought Him
precious gifts—
gifts fit for a king.
They bowed low and
worshiped Him.

How can we do any less?
With all the elaborate celebrating
this time of year,
how much do we truly worship Him?

Christmas is a story of worship.
And this season,
in the privacy of our hearts,
with the wise men,
with the shepherds, and
with all creation,
let us bow and worship Him.
Let us worship
Jesus.

All the Angels Worship You (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

All the angels worship You.
All the heavens bow.
All the powers high above
Kneel before You now.
All that was,
All that is,
All that is to come,
All God's awesome majesties
Fill You, Lowly One.

Angry voices, angry hands
Soon will take Your life.
Joy will rise, a mighty flood,
From Your sacrifice.
Holy Child,
Precious Lamb,
Son of God above,
Here we bow forevermore,
Lost in praise and love.

Christmas Is the Story of a Gift

On coming to the house, [the Magi] saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. (Matthew 2:11, NIV)

Christmas is the story of a Gift.

Love enjoys giving gifts!
Love doesn't give out of obligation
 or selfish motives.
Love gives out of joy.
Love gives because
 love is kind and
 longs to bless everyone within its reach.

God is love.
He is the giver of every good gift.
He doesn't give out of need —
 He has no need.
God gives because He is full and overflows.
He gives because He longs to bless
 each and every one of us.

At Christmas God gives the greatest gift that can be given.
He gives us *Himself*.
To we who are so selfish
 He is love —
 pure, boundless, unconditional love.
To all who are fearful and despairing
 He is hope.
In our worries and anxieties
 He is joy and peace.
 He is deep, unshakable well-being.
And to all of us who are slaves to death
 He is life —
 rich, full, ever-growing life.

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
Thanks be to God for
 Jesus.

*Almighty Holy Father,
You do not abandon us to
our puny self-improvement schemes and*

*our stumbling efforts.
Your gift to each of us and all of us is
the mighty life of Jesus Christ,
ours by simple faith.*

Jesus, the Gift of Christmas (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Almighty God, we hear You call.
We come and bow, so weak and small,
To seek what You would give us all:
Jesus, the Gift of Christmas.

Quiet our hearts while resting here.
No loud desire, no anxious fear
Should enter now while He is near--
Jesus, the Gift of Christmas.

Father, may simple faith increase
And bring our souls that sweet release
To know Your love and joy and peace –
Jesus, the Gift of Christmas.

Consider This Gift

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15, NIV)

This Gift is a treasure,
but more than a treasure.
This Gift is a man,
but more than a man.
He is a shepherd,
but more than a shepherd.
He is a mighty warrior come to deliver His people,
a healer come to take away all our diseases,
a priest come to bring His people to God.
But He is infinitely more than
any and all of these.

He is the heir of all worlds,
the Lord of all Lords.
He is the Second Adam,
the first of an entirely new human race.
He is the God-Man,
uniting earth and heaven.
He is the perfect sacrifice,
purchasing eternal life for all who trust Him.
He is the fullness of God, and
God's fullness in us.
He is God's own Son,
come from God's own heart.
He is the love of God,
lavishly,
freely,
tenderly given
to each and every one of us.
He is Jesus Christ.

Jesus
(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Jesus, Jesus, High and Holy,
You whom worlds cannot contain,
Boundless life no mind can fathom,
Boundless love no word can name;
Yet You share Your life and glory,
Make Your love a simple story,
Glad to share our time and space,
Glad to bathe our sin in grace.

Holy Lord and humble servant,
Mighty God and helpless Child.
Shepherd, lamb, and timeless sovereign
Sin and death could not defile.
Lord, I reach to see and know You,
Lifting love I long to show You,
But You fill my needy heart
As I rest in all You are.

Great Creator, God and Savior,
Light of that eternal day,
All creation stands to worship,
Fills the sky with endless praise.
We Your people bow, confessing,
Lifting honor, praise, and blessing;
This the goal of all we do:
Now, forever only You.

Seeing God

Father, You are an infinite Spirit being,
overflowing this vast universe,
holy, all-powerful, and complete in Yourself,
pure, unreflected Light.

I am a grain of sand,
a passing breath,
selfish, helpless, and engulfed in my own darkness.

I could never have known You,
but You shined the Light of Jesus Christ
into my world and
into my life.

Thank You, thank You, thank You,
my Father!

Praise,
worship, and
love

be to You forever and ever!
Glory in the highest!

You Are the Light

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

You are the Light – we see.
You are the Truth – we know.
You are the Life – we live.
You are the Hope,
You are the Joy,
You are the Song we sing.

Within our hearts – Your light.
Within our minds – Your truth.
Within our lives – Your love.
Living Your hope,
Spreading Your joy,
Singing Your beautiful song.

When the Heavens Open

When God opens the heavens,
He shows us what He is doing.
He shows us our world as He sees it.

When Jesus was born, God opened the heavens.
He sent us a special star to announce that
the magnificent, transcendent God was
now living among us.
The star drew worshipers from
a far-away land and
a different religion.
They were the first sign that the One who had come was
the Light of all the nations and
the King of all Kings.

When Jesus was baptized, God opened the heavens.
As Jesus' ministry began, His first act was to publicly
take all our sins upon Himself.
The Sinless One lined up with the sinners and
symbolically died beneath Jordan's waters,
bearing the sins of the whole world.
At this crucial moment the Father spoke and
the Spirit appeared.
Together they testified that
this was indeed the pure and perfect Son of God.

When Jesus was on the mount of transfiguration,
God opened the heavens.
As Jesus approached His death,
the Father gave three disciples a fleeting glimpse of
the Christ as He truly was,
in His eternal splendor,
human yet heavenly.
The law and the prophets visibly testified to Him.

On all three occasions, God opened the heavens to show us
unmistakably,
unforgettably
that His own Son had come to us,
the Light of the World.
He had taken on our flesh and blood
to bear away all our sin.
He had come so that every one of us might
share fully and forever in Him.

Epiphany Hymn (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

God is light! The heavens open!
See the star announce the Son!
God transcendent lives among us.
See the distant nations come.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
All our race in Him is one.

God is light! The heavens open!
See our Savior bear our sin.
Dying here in Jordan's waters,
See His sacrifice begin.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
All who come are cleansed in Him.

God is light! The heavens open!
Glimpse what eyes have never seen:
God the Son in all His splendor,
Flesh in heaven's majesty.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
See our glorious destiny!

A Life Framed with Love

Read Matthew 2:12-18

Jesus was born as He would die.
He would die as He was born.

The birth and death of the Light of the World
were shrouded in darkness.

His trusted companions were the lowly and powerless.

Jealous leaders pursued Him with murderous hearts
while humble women gently cared for His needs.

His helpless body was wrapped in cloth and laid in borrowed quarters.

Coming and going from this world,
He was immersed in suffering, shame, and desperate circumstances.

Jesus is a portrait of God our Father,
framed with tenderness, mercy, and sacrificial love.

*Father, I look at the life of your Son, and
I see the full extent of Your love
etched on every page.
Throughout His birth, His life, and His death,
He drank our shame and suffering full strength.
Father, I bow in silence.
How can I respond to You?
How can I live my love for You?*

One with Us

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Darkness and poverty greet our Messiah.
Weakness and shame are His swaddling clothes.
Nursed by our bitterness, suffering, and sorrow,
Death is the pathway the infant knows.

A DEEPER CHRISTMAS, p.150

Evil and anger now crown our Messiah.
Anguish and blood are His kingly clothes.
Drinking the cup of our deep separation,
Dark is the pathway His mercy chose.

Precious and tender His kiss of forgiveness!
Love everlasting embraces earth!
Holy and human united forever,
Life in its fullness has come to birth!

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Glimpses of Messiah's Future

Read Matthew 2

Before the Christ child was old enough to do anything on His own, He was already provoking strong reactions from those for Him and against Him. Even as an infant, He was both a cornerstone and a stumbling block, fulfilling the prophecy of Simeon:

"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." (Luke 2:34-35, NIV)

In Matthew 2 we catch these glimpses of Messiah's future:

1. His own people, who were expecting His coming, generally met Him with ignorance, indifference, or hostility. Instead, He drew individual worshipers, often Gentiles, from far away and from unexpected sources. (Matthew 2:1-12)
2. Christ shared the sufferings of His people, Israel: He fled for His life to Egypt, lived there as a refugee, and was eventually called out by His Father. (Matthew 2:13-15, 19-21)
3. Those nearest to Jesus were frequently pursued, persecuted, and martyred. (Matthew 2:16-18)
4. He identified, not with the powerful and privileged, but with the very lowest and most despised of His people. (Matthew 2:22-23)

Get to know this unique, controversial, intriguing, and intensely personal Son of God and Son of Man.

See How God's Flower Blossoms

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

See how God's flower blossoms
From dry and hardened earth,
And from our sin and darkness,
A child of humble birth;
So small for such a need,
Yet all of love's long promise
Is in that tiny seed.

The breath of God eternal
Fills fragile flesh and bone
With truth and love and beauty
That glows of God alone.
And we have seen His face –
The glory of the Father,
The flower of His grace.

This flower is now a garden,
The fruit of that small seed,
A promise green and growing,
An Eden yet to be.
O Christ, our heart's delight!
We rise and bloom and flourish
In You, our love and life!

Promises of His Coming Again

Christmas Is Past, Present, and Future

Christmas is more than just a celebration of a past event,
however wonderful or important.

The God who came to us as an infant still comes to us
personally,
gently,
quietly,
now as then.

He still comes to us as marvelous, mysterious Life,
drawing us toward Himself.

He is still the Light in every dark place,
the Star shining from the bottomless blackness,
the fresh glow in every dingy stable.

He still invites the magi and the shepherds,
the highest and lowest of people.

He still comes in stunning humility,
yet in unearthly glory.

He is still awe-inspiring in
His transcendence and
His simplicity.

The God who came
is still coming.

And He is coming again.

As before, He will come
unexpectedly,
after a seemingly endless wait, and
at just the right time.

But this time, He will come,
not quietly,
but with sound of a trumpet;
not simply,
but with all of heaven's angels;
not in a dark corner,
but where every eye will see Him.

He will come,
not as a helpless infant,

but as sovereign Lord and Judge of all.

The God who came
is coming and
will come again
 in love,
 to save completely all who will receive Him.

God Is Here among Us

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

God is here among us,
Crying in the night,
Cradled in our darkness,
Come to be our Light.
He was born to suffer,
One with all who grieve.
He is born within us
As we just believe.

Sharing all our smallness,
Feeling all our pain,
He is boundless blessing
Time cannot contain,
Song in all our silence,
Peace in all our fear,
Hope through every sorrow,
Brother ever near.

Star of all the ages
Piercing through our night,
Joy of every stable,
Comfort, warmth, and light,
Love's unchanging promise,
Heaven's sure reward,
Praise to You, our Savior,
Jesus, holy Lord!

Rejoice in Your Destiny

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
(2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV)*

The Christmas story is so simple that a child can enjoy it, yet so broad and deep that no human mind can grasp it all. A Being so magnificent that He spoke the universe into existence from nothing – He merely expressed His will and it appeared – this Being became entirely human and lived among us.

We could see and touch the One who transcends all matter. What we saw, what we touched was love – pure, complete, compassionate love, in a world soaked with fear and selfishness.

This Being became humble. How could the sovereign source of all be humble? The immense God became small for us. Perfect wisdom, perfect peace, perfect love became small and simple enough for us.

In this One, our mortality took on immortality. The human has become divine. Humility glows with Majesty. Weakness is now strength. Our darkness now shines with the splendor of Almighty God.

Look at Jesus Christ. He has become what we can be:
a creature one with our Creator;
a child of man and a child of God;
thoroughly human, yet holy and divine.

Look at Jesus Christ and rejoice in your destiny.

*O God, for me make
the waiting and hoping of Advent
no longer just a season,
but a constant hunger for You.*

Be Immanuel in Me (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Immanuel,
Be Immanuel in me –
All of God filling all I am.
In Your beauty,
In Your holiness,
In the fulness of Your love,
Immanuel,
Be Immanuel in me.

O Prince of Peace,
Be the Prince of Peace in me –
Sweet shalom filling all I am.
In Your beauty,
In Your holiness,
In the fulness of Your love,
O Prince of Peace,
Be the Prince of Peace in me.

Word of our Father,
Our Wisdom and Power,
Our Manna from Heaven,
The Water of Life;
Spirit of Truth and
The Fountain of Mercy,
The Glory of Heaven,
The Light of the World.

Immanuel,
Be Immanuel in me –
All of God filling all I am.
In Your beauty,
In Your holiness,
In the fulness of Your love,
Immanuel,
Be Immanuel in me.

Christmas Is Only the Beginning

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.... I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.
(Revelation 22:13, 16, NIV)

Christmas is only the beginning.
It's the beginning of a beautiful Life –
a Life of healing and teaching,
of feeding and forgiving,
a Life of suffering, dying, and
rising again.
This Life shows us the best
and happiest way to live.

This Life still goes on
and will go on forever,
redeeming,
blessing,
creating,
and surprising.

Discover this Life.
Discover the One who is
the Beginning and the Ending,
Life's Source and
its Ultimate Goal,
the One who
lived in time
but fills eternity,
Who was a tiny baby,
yet the whole universe
cannot contain Him.

This Christmas,
make the greatest discovery of your life.
Now, today,
come discover
Jesus.

Discover Jesus Christ (Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Discover in a tiny child
The Lord of time and space,
In helplessness and poverty,
The hope of all our race.
The spring of joy, the dawn of peace,
The mystery of life –
Come touch the hand and heart of God:
Discover Jesus Christ.

Come see the most despised of men;
Come see the most adored.
Come watch Him move in mighty love;
Come wonder at His words.
Come see Him suffer, see His pain;
Stand watching as He dies,
And hear forgiveness for your sins:
Discover Jesus Christ.

Now see the One you crucified –
He lives, and all is well.
His Spirit fills the universe,
Our Lord, Emmanuel.
Discover hope. Discover joy.
Discover love and life.
Discover God your dearest friend.
Discover Jesus Christ.

The Word: in Weakness and in Power

In the beginning,
into the silence of nothingness came
 the Word of God.
The Sovereign of the universe expressed His will, and
 it became reality.
The Word of God spoke, and
 creation came to be, and
 all the morning stars sang for joy.
His powerful Word continues to resound,
 sustaining all that is.

Into the darkness of our sin came
 the Word of God.
God spoke His loving will,
 not as an almighty conqueror,
 but as a helpless infant.
He didn't shout;
 He whispered.
He didn't command;
 He invited.
The Word of God spoke,
 not in power,
 but in weakness.

And when His Word speaks to us,
 He still speaks in weakness, not in power.
He doesn't demand in harsh tones.
He speaks gently,
 inviting,
 drawing us to Himself.

But at a time He alone has chosen,
 the Word of God will again speak with absolute power.
The Sovereign of all reality will express His will,
 and all that is will respond.
Creation will again be an Eden of
 holiness and beauty,
 truth and love,
 completely one with its Maker.
To those who have listened to His inviting Word,
 this will mean sharing the fullness of His life forever.
To those who have ignored His Word, this will mean
 eternal exclusion,
 separation from Him, and

death.

He is still speaking in a gentle whisper,
calling,
inviting,
drawing.
Hear the Word.
Receive the Word.

Hear the Word

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Into silence came the Word,
Boundless, all-creating Life.
Sovereign Light,
Sovereign Love
Spoke the still-resounding Word.

Into darkness came the Word,
Weak and lowly, just a child,
Helpless God,
Mighty love.
Hear the gentle, whispered Word.

In your heart receive the Word.
Love is singing! Life is near!
As He calls,
As He waits,
Bow in silence, hear the Word.

You have heard, now speak the Word.
Use your hands and heart and voice!
Sing the truth!
Dance the joy!
Live the beauty! Speak the Word!

Reflection on Psalm 98

From the very beginning,
 God has longed to be
 with His people.
From the garden to the
 wilderness, from the
 tabernacle to the
 temple,
God has burned with the desire to
 live among His people and
 be their God in the fullest possible sense.

He planned it.
He promised it, and
 in His absolute sovereignty,
 He determined that it would be so.

He came once –
 to become one of us and
 to give His own life to rescue us.
And He left only
 to pour out His Spirit on us and
 to prepare for our full, eternal union with Him.

The same sovereign love that caused Him to come once
 is bringing Him back.
He has promised, and
 He yearns for us with the heart of a Father.
Nothing can keep Him away.
 Nothing.

All His people,
all the nations,
all creation,
 rejoice!
 Stay ready!
 Wait expectantly!

He
is
coming!

Psalm 98

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Sing our sovereign God unchanging.
Sing a joy each moment new.
Sing His deep and endless wonders.
Sing what mighty love can do.

Refrain:

He comes!
He comes!
Rejoice!
Be ready!
Set your heart on Him alone.

All the earth, receive Your Savior,
Life and freedom, truth and grace,
Justice, peace, and rich abundance.
Praise your Maker face-to-face!

All creation joins the singing.
Earth and heavens, distant lands,
Mountains, islands dance with gladness,
All the rivers clap their hands.

The Second Coming

“Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” (2 Peter 3:4, NASB)

The New Testament teaches that the same Christ who came in weakness as an infant will return in power and great glory. His first coming was secretive. But the second time, “every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7, NASB).

But nearly two thousand years have passed, and still, no Second Coming. And since our Savior Himself said that no one can know when it will occur, it could be another ten thousand years before the prophecy is finally fulfilled.

So why do we continue to teach, write, sing, and make movies about it? To many, the idea of Christ coming in the clouds, in full view of every living human being, seems hard to believe and remote from practical daily life. Why should we risk embarrassing ourselves and alienating our listeners by emphasizing such an incredible idea, one that even believers admit might not happen for generations, centuries, or even millennia?

Consider this:

1. Jesus taught His return as centrally important. He spoke about it clearly, emphatically, and at length. Realize that He knew life both in heaven and on earth. He had seen both time and eternity. If He considered His return important, it is important!
2. The New Testament writers unanimously teach it. The Spirit of Christ spoke about His return through each and every one of them. They considered it essential to believe that Christ will come to finish all that He has started and to consummate our salvation. For all the New Testament writers, the truth of Christ’s return fueled faith, hope, perseverance, and holy living.
3. The stakes are high. When Christ returns, He will judge every individual. Depending on our relationship with Him, we will go to eternal life or eternal death, to joyful union with Him or complete and final separation from Him (Matthew 25:31-46).
4. When He comes, we must be ready. Since no one can know when He will return (Matthew 24:36), His return will seem sudden and unexpected (Matthew 24:37-44). He will come as a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2). The only sure way to be prepared is to stay prepared (Luke 12:35-48).
5. Christ’s first coming had been foretold for centuries, and He did come, at God’s right time. His second coming, long foretold, is just as certain. It will occur when the time is right. The reality of Christmas proclaims the reality of His return.

6. Peter reminds us that with our eternal God, *“one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day”* (2 Peter 3:8, NASB; see also Psalm 90:4). His sense of time is far different than ours. But be assured that He is not lax about His promises but *“is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:8-9). God’s “delays” are His patient love.

Consider the beautiful things Christ has done in you already, and eagerly anticipate His completing each one. Look forward to that wonderful day. Wait patiently for it, knowing that it will happen in the fullness of time. Keep first things first. Stay focused on Him. Stay faithful.

Second Coming Hymn

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Jesus Messiah is coming, coming.
He who has come will be coming again,
Coming in clouds with great power. See Him!
As He ascended He’s coming again!

Angels will gather His people. See them!
All will be changed in the blink of an eye.
We will be like Him in glory, glory.
Lift up your heads — He is coming again!

Then every eye will behold Him, see Him.
None will ignore or deny Him that day.
Hear all the mockers now weeping, wailing.
Make yourself ready — He’s coming again!

Be on your guard, ever watching, waiting,
Trusting, obeying, and looking to Him.
Stay at your task and be faithful, faithful.
Live in the joy — He is coming again!

We Wait

Romans 8 tells us:

The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we were saved.

But hope that is seen is no hope at all.

Who hopes for what he already has?

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. (vv.22-25, NIV)

So Father, we wait.

Basking in the joy and freedom of all You've given us in Jesus Christ, we eagerly await His return and the completion of all Your love has planned.

We wait.

Immersed in disappointments and delays,
weakness and uncertainty,
decay and death,

we keep our faith focused on You.

Though we cannot see,

we cling to the strong and certain hope that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Day by day, in the noise and in the silence, our hearts forever cry,

"Father, may *Your* Kingdom come and
Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven!"

We wait.

So many are deluded,

lost in the darkness of the small and temporary.

In You we glimpse bigger realities.

Our physical world seems so lasting and all-encompassing,
but it will burn away like a morning mist.

Father, don't let it seduce us.

You are truth.

You are unchanging.

You are forever.

In this false world, keep us faithful in proclaiming the ultimate things:

the return of Jesus,
the judgment, and

the world to come.
Whether He returns today or in ten thousand years is not the point.
The truth of His return shapes the entire reality in which we live.

Our Father, we look forward to the day when all creation rings with
the music and the beautiful silence of all You are.

As we believers wait together,
enduring these last hours of pain, darkness, grief, and death,
we'll encourage one another to the hope and joy that are ours in You.
We'll share songs, stories, and acts of kindness that remind us of
Your eternal, unfailing love.

*Father, I will remain dressed and ready,
at my post and fully engaged in the ministry
You have assigned me,
with my heart fixed on You.*

Waiting for Our Lord

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

O God of love and faithfulness,
We wait that day unknown
When all our darkness, all our grief
Dissolve in You alone.
Like Mary in her labor
Engulfed by waves of pain,
We cry from all-consuming need
That words could never frame.

Our hungry hearts anticipate
The joy that soon will be,
When love has borne delicious fruit
For all to taste and see.
O come to us, Lord Jesus!
We're watching at the door
Till just one glimpse of You fulfills
Our hopes and so much more!

God Keeps His Promises

During His final days on earth, Jesus told His disciples what was to come:

“All the nations of the earth... will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

(Matthew 24:30-31, NIV)

Every year Advent and Christmas shout this truth:

God keeps His promises.

Though the promises are ancient, and
the wait is long, and
the fulfillment seems so improbable,
God always keeps His promises.

For centuries God had spoken through His prophets,
telling in amazing detail of a coming Messiah.

Jesus Christ came exactly as prophesied.

The same God promises that
this same Jesus will come again.

He urges us to be watchful,
to be faithful,
for the Day will come when least expected.

Lord, we are watching.

We are waiting.

We are obeying.

Come, Lord Jesus!

Consider this:

*The great drama of salvation,
with all its faithfulness and betrayal,
its patient endurance and apostasy,
its self-centeredness and self-sacrifice,
is going on right now.
Each of us is taking part day by day.*

*Father, when Jesus returns,
may I be faithfully at my post,
trusting,
serving, and
eagerly expecting Him.*

The Trumpet Will Sound

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

The trumpet will sound.
Our Lord will descend
On clouds with great power and glory.
The dead will arise,
Then those who remain
Will gather to Him from all nations.
All hearts will be one,
Yes, we will be one
Forever with Christ our Lord!

One blink of an eye
And we will be changed.
This dying will vanish forever.
Then all will be clothed
In unending life.
Immortal, we'll reign in His presence.
O thanks be to God!
All thanks be to God!
Our future is Christ our Lord!

Salvation to God
Who sits on the throne,
And unto the Lamb be all glory!
All wisdom and strength,
All honor and praise
Forever and ever be given!
Your people say, "Come!"
Our spirits say, "Come!"
O come, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Reflection on Psalm 72

Father, Your Messiah reigns!
He is filled with all
 Your justice,
 Your holiness,
 Your goodness, and
 Your truth,
and we are complete in Him.

All creation is complete in Him,
 re-imagined,
 re-made,
 reborn.

Nothing remains that is not from
 Him,
 the holy Christ,
 Your Son.

Death is gone,
 forever removed from our glorious home.

Life,
beauty, and
fruitfulness are exploding
 all around us,
 at every level.

Creation itself is singing His name!

His reign is complete, filling all
 time and
 space.

His character,
His life,
His being
 now reshape all reality.

Need,
narrowness, and
sorrow
 are forever past.

Only abundance,
 peace, and
 joy are ahead.

Blessed be You, Eternal Father, and
blessed be Your Son,
Jesus Christ,
 our Savior,

our Brother,
our King!

Psalm 72

(Hymn)

[Recording](#)
[Printed Music](#)

Truth and justice, grace and peace
Now reign in Christ the Son.
Endless, unimagined life
Has only just begun.
See them blooming all around –
Every blessing love has sworn.
Earth is bathed in all He is
And gloriously reborn.

All creation sings His praise.
O see the hills rejoice!
Hear the trees all clap their hands
And mountains lift their voice.
Every knee now bows to Him,
Every kingdom, every throne.
Riches, honor, wisdom, power,
And praise are all His own.

Sovereign, all-transcending God,
So quick to condescend,
All-in-all, the Lord I AM,
Our Brother, Savior, Friend!
Every joy forevermore,
Every longing we pursue,
Life and beauty, truth and love
Are always only You.

A DEEPER CHRISTMAS, p.171

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