

## CFBC Hymns Class 16

### Charles Wesley (Christmas Hymns)

#### **Come, thou long-expected Jesus**

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
Born to set thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art;  
Dear Desire of ev'ry nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,  
Born a child, and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us for ever,  
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By thine all-sufficient merit  
Raise us to thy glorious throne.

#### **Excerpts from Ligon Duncan on *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus***

“Come, thou long-expected Jesus” was probably one of the first hymns that Wesley wrote. It was published in a collection of hymns in 1744 called, *Hymns on The Nativity of Our Lord*, and so their theme was the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to note how rich these two stanzas are with biblical, with scriptural truth. In fact, I want to suggest to you that ***there are sixteen distinct scriptural allusions, or biblical thoughts, to be found in just these two stanzas. If you will look, there are eight phrases in the first stanza, and there are eight phrases in the second stanza, and each of them contains a beautiful allusion to biblical truth.***

**First there are the words, “Come, Thou long-expected Jesus.” That asks us to look at the first coming of Christ from the perspective of an Old Testament saint.** For the Old Testament saint, Jesus’ first coming has not yet occurred. So we are asked to take the position of an Old Testament saint, not unlike Simeon in the passage from Luke 2 and look at the coming of Christ with a longing expectation that the Messiah is coming into the world.

But there is a delightful irony in Charles Wesley's very first words. He says: "Come, Thou long-expected...*Jesus*." That is a name that the Old Testament saint did not have the privilege of knowing. The Old Testament saint longed for the coming of Messiah, but he didn't know that Messiah would be Jesus, and as new covenant saints we have the privilege of calling upon the name of the person of the Messiah. We sing the name of the Messiah back to God, whereas the old covenant saint could only look forward to His coming. "Come, Thou long-expected Jesus...."

**Secondly, "...born to set Thy people free."** Here Wesley tells you what **Jesus came for. He came as a redeemer. He came as a deliverer.** He came to buy His people back from their bondage. The work of the Redeemer was that of deliverer: to "set His people free."

**Thirdly, look at the phrase "From our sins and fears release us..."** Here Wesley tells you what **Jesus came to deliver us from: from our sin, from our guilt, from our fear of condemnation.** Jesus the Messiah, our Savior, came to deliver us from sin and misery, and from the dread of God's judgment.

**Fourthly, he says "...let us find our rest in Thee."** Wesley is asking us to make sure that the hope of our salvation is in **Jesus the Messiah alone.** The only place that we have to go for refuge, for rest, for redemption from our sins is in Jesus Christ, and we sing it in that phrase, "...let us find our rest in Thee."

**"Israel's strength and consolation..."** is the fifth phrase in the first stanza, and this reminds us that **Jesus is the fulfillment of all those Old Testament messianic prophecies promising that one day Messiah would come and strengthen, and comfort and restore God's ancient people, Israel.** Wesley has us acknowledging that Jesus the Messiah is Israel's strength and consolation.

**The sixth phrase: "Hope of all the earth art Thou."** In other words, **Jesus is not only the Redeemer of God's ancient people Israel, He is the hope of the Gentiles, of all peoples.** He is Savior, as Paul would say, "...of both Jew and Greek." He is the Savior of Israel and of the Gentiles.

**This theme continues on in the seventh phrase of the first stanza: "Dear Desire of every nation..."** Here Wesley is reminding us that **Jesus the Messiah is the one, the only one, who can answer the need,**

**the deepest need, of every land and every people. He is the only hope of salvation for every tribe and tongue and people and nation.**

**Finally, in the eighth phrase of the first stanza, he says “...Joy of every longing heart.” And there Wesley is telling us that Jesus is the joyful answer to the heart longing for peace with God.** If there is a heart that longs for peace with God, for reconciliation with God, for communion to be restored with God, Jesus is the only one who can give a heart that joy.

Notice the richness of those biblical ideas. All of them are derived from Scripture. Now look at stanza two...

**The ninth idea that we see in Wesley's two stanzas is found in this phrase: “...born, Thy people to deliver.” He's saying there that Jesus the Messiah was born. He became a human. He was incarnate for the purpose of our redemption.** That was the purpose of his being born into this world.

**The tenth phrase, in the very next words, “...born a child, and yet a king...” presents one of those ironies of the Christmas story. Jesus, though He is born as a child...obscure, unlooked for by His contemporaries, yet the king of His people.** “Born a child, and yet a king.”

**Then we see an eleventh statement: He was “born to reign in us forever.” Jesus' work was to establish His reign, His rule, in His people.** His purpose was to establish the reign of God in us.

**Next, “...now Thy gracious kingdom bring.”** When we pray the Lord's Prayer, one of the things that we pray to God is “Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” This is a like petition: Thy gracious kingdom bring. **It's a petition for Jesus' reign to come in us now. We're saying, ‘Lord Jesus, come and reign among us. Come and reign now.’**

**The thirteenth phrase is: “...by Thine own eternal Spirit...”** There is a recognition on Wesley's part that if Christ is going to reign in us, the only way He's going to reign in us is through the work of the Holy Spirit.

**The fourteenth phrase is: “...rule in all our hearts alone.”** That's a petition for Christ to be the only Lord in the lives of all His people. Many of us struggle sometimes. We profess Christ; we trust in Christ for salvation, and yet we find our hearts wanting to go the way of the world and of the flesh, and of the devil.

**Here Wesley is giving us words whereby we petition for the sole sovereignty of Christ in our lives: that He would be the only Lord; that we would live as if He were our only master; and that this would be true in the lives of all His people. “Rule in all our hearts alone...”**

**The fifteenth petition is: “By Thine all-sufficient merit...” There we find in that phrase a petition for God to save His people by the merit of Jesus Christ.** And it's one of my favorite phrases in all of this Christmas carol. **It acknowledges that only Jesus' work, only Jesus' perfection, only His perfect obedience can save us.** Our merits cannot save us, they will only condemn us; our works cannot save us, they will only condemn us. But Christ's work, Christ's fulfillment of the Law, Christ's perfect life, Christ's death on our behalf fulfilling the penal sanctions of the Law—these things save us, and so we sing this petition: “Lord, save us by Thine all-sufficient merit.”

**Finally, the sixteenth phrase: “Raise us to Thy glorious throne.” This calls on Christ, by His own merit and grace, to completely save us and to bring us into everlasting communion with the living God.**

We're going to look at three particular truths that are found among those sixteen ideas based on Luke 2.

**I want you to see three themes: the theme of Jesus' fulfillment of the Law; the theme of Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God; and the theme of the necessity of faith in Jesus.**

### **I. Jesus fulfilled the law of God, the Torah, and the Torah has its fulfillment in Him.**

First, if you'll look at Luke 2:21-24, we see Luke emphasizing Jesus' fulfillment of the laws of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers; and, more particularly, Jesus' fulfillment of the laws of God for us. Here in verses 21-24, Luke is reminding us that from His very infancy, Jesus fulfilled the Law of God. His parents had Him circumcised according to the Law, on the eighth day. His parents observed the laws of purification set forth in the laws of Moses. His parents brought Him to the temple to dedicate Him to the Lord as the first-born, just as God had commanded through Moses in the Book of Exodus, and made provision for in the Books of Leviticus and Numbers.

The point that Luke is making is that Jesus fulfilled all the Law of God—the Torah of God, the instruction of God—and that that Law was ultimately fulfilled in Him. Notice how many times Luke repeats the phrase “the Law.” He speaks of the law of Moses in verse 22; the Law of the Lord in verse 23;

and, the Law of the Lord again in verse 24. He's driving home a point: that Jesus fulfilled not only bearing the penalty of the Law in His death, but that He fulfilled the Law in His life by His obedience to it, even from the time of His infancy.

Why is this so important? Because Jesus' obedience to the Law, both actively and passively... both preceptively (obeying the precepts of the law) and penally (being punished for the breaking of the Law) by His people...is the basis of our salvation. He fulfilled the Law for us completely. Were we to stand before God and be measured by our fulfillment of the Law, every single one of us would be condemned. But Luke is reminding you here and he will continue to remind you throughout his gospel, that Jesus fulfilled the Law in the place of all who trusted in Him.

Did you notice how Charles Wesley reminds us of that glorious truth in the fourth stanza of the hymn? It's in that fifteenth phrase: "By Thy all-sufficient merit...." By Jesus' merit, by His fulfilling of the whole Law actively and passively, we are raised to the glorious throne of God. So there's the first theme: Jesus fulfills the whole Law for us.

## **II. Simeon was waiting for the long-expected Messiah.**

Secondly, look at verses 25-32. Here we see Simeon waiting for the long-expected Messiah, and God has told him by revelation that he will not die until he sees the One who is the anointed of the Lord: the Messiah, the Christ, the One who will redeem Israel. And Simeon lives in the hope of the fulfillment of the promises of God, for since Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 12:1-3, and Genesis 15, and Genesis 17. The people of God for literally thousands of years have been waiting for the One who is the "seed of the woman"; the One who was the Messiah, the anointed of God, who would come and deliver His people.

And Simeon has the privilege of holding this child. Mary and Joseph come into the temple; they are intercepted by this godly and devout man, who holds the child in his arms and sings a song of praise to God, saying, 'Lord, you can let me die in peace now, because You have fulfilled Your word, and my eyes...' (notice what he says in verses 30-31)... 'my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.'"

Do you see what Simeon says there? He says, 'Lord, I am holding now in my arms the One who is the long-awaited Messiah of Israel, and I understand now why You have allowed these much despised Romans to invade and occupy and rule in this land.

You have brought the nations to the land of Your people, so that when Your Son was brought into the world it would be seen that He was not only the Savior of Israel, but that He was the Savior of the nations. I'm understanding Your providence, O God. You caused Your Son to be brought into the world at a time when He could be brought into the world in the presence of all the nations that are right here, occupying Israel right now. And He is the salvation for both Israel and for those Gentiles.'

Did you notice how Charles Wesley so beautifully captures that truth in the first stanza, in the second part of the first stanza, when he sings, "Come, Thou long-expected Jesus...Israel's hope and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art..." He's the Savior of both Israel and of all the earth. Jesus fulfills the promises of God to Israel and to the Gentiles, and Jesus' coming in the fullness of time even explains God's providence in allowing Israel to be occupied by this invading Roman force.

If Simeon can wait in hope and faith for the coming, the first coming of the Messiah, so ought we to wait expectantly for the second coming of the Messiah. My friends, as blessed a thing as it was for Simeon to hold the Christ, the Messiah, as a child in his arms, you understand, of course, that you know far more about that Christ than Simeon ever did. Simeon went to the grave not knowing that the Messiah would lay down His life for His people. He went to the grave not knowing that He would be raised from the dead for the life of His people; that He would ascend on high, leading captivity captive, and that He would be sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, ever living to intercede.

Simeon knew nothing of this! And yet, he trusted in God. When you hold those Gospels in your hands; when you read Matthew, Mark and Luke and John; when you sing carol after carol, you will be rehearsing truths to which Simeon was not privileged. You have every reason to continue to live in expectant hope, trusting in the second coming of the long-expected Messiah, who promised His people that He would come again with clouds and glory descending.

### **III. Jesus is the dividing point of history, humanity and salvation.**

One last thing: look at verses 33-34, because there we learn that Jesus is the dividing point of history. He's the dividing point of humanity. He's the dividing point of salvation. And here we are reminded of the necessity of faith in Jesus the Messiah as our only Lord and Savior.

Notice what Simeon says to Mary in verse 34: Mary, "...this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed..."

Many in this world are purely sentimental about the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ—this cute little baby in a manger. But here Simeon says, ‘Mary, let me tell you about this boy. He has been appointed by God for the rising and falling of many in Israel. Those who accept Him, who embrace Him as Messiah, who trust in Him alone for salvation, they will be ushered into the fullness of the blessings and kingdom of God. But, Mary, those who reject Him, those who are indifferent to Him, those who spurn Him, they will be cast out. They will be judged. They will be condemned, for He has been appointed for both the rising and the falling of many in Israel.

**My friends, He is the only hope of salvation, and if we accept Him, we will live; but if we reject Him, it is certain that we will die.**

Simeon is saying that even to this dear mother, as he hands the baby back to her in the temple precincts; and it reminds us, my friends, that as we sing and as we hear these familiar and beautiful and beloved passages read over and over, that our business is to respond in faith to these words. For these are not simply stories to bring back memories of our youth, fond reflections of times gone by of family and kin gathered around a tree, or a meal, or a fellowship.

These words are given to us as the words of life, and those who believe in them will live now and forevermore. And those who reject them will not. May God enable us to respond in faith throughout this season to God's word.

<https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/come-thou-long-expected-jesus/>

## **Hark, the Herald Angels Sing**

One of the deepest and richest Christmas carols of all was written by Charles Wesley in 1739 — "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing."

Consider "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" for the richness of its Scriptural allusions and teachings. **The carol includes references to a number of the Messianic prophecies pointing to the birth of the Messiah...**

### **Verse 1:**

Hark the herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild  
God and sinners reconciled"

Luke 2:13-14 (NKJV)  
 And suddenly there was with the angel a **multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"**

2 Corinthians  
 5:18-19 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them**, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

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SCRIPTURE REFERENCES  
**HARK! THE HERALD  
 ANGELS SING**

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**1** Hark, how all the welkin rings,  
 "Glory to the King of kings;  
 Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
 God and sinners reconciled!"

1 Tim. 6:14-15; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:16  
 Luke 2:14  
 Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21-22

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Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
 Join the triumph of the skies:  
 Universal nature say,  
 "Christ the Lord is born to-day!"

Psalm 67:4  
 Psalm 19:1; Psalm 97:6  
 Luke 2:11

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**2** Christ, by highest Heaven ador'd,  
 Christ, the everlasting Lord:  
 Late in time behold him come,  
 Offspring of a Virgin's womb!

Rev. 5:13  
 Isa. 40:28  
 Isa. 7:14

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Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see,  
 Hail the incarnate deity!  
 Pleased as man with men to appear,  
 Jesus! Our Immanuel here!

John 1:14; Heb. 10:20  
 Luke 1:31-32  
 Phil. 2:7-8  
 Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23

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**3** Hail, the heavenly Prince of Peace!  
 Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!  
 Light and life to all he brings,  
 Risen with healing in his wings.

Isa. 9:6  
 Mal. 4:2  
 John 1:9; John 8:12  
 Mal. 4:2

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Mild He lays his glory by,  
 Born that man no more may die;  
 Born to raise the sons of earth;  
 Born to give them second birth.

Phil. 2:5-7  
 John 5:24  
 John 3:3

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Joyful, all ye nations rise  
 Join the triumph of the skies  
 With the angelic host proclaim:  
 "Christ is born in Bethlehem"

Luke 2:10-12 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of **great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord**. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."



Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

**Verse 2:**

Christ by highest heav'n adored  
Christ the everlasting Lord!

Philippians 2:9-11 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that **at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth**, and that every tongue will confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.

Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, **Eternal** Father, Prince of Peace.

Late in time behold Him come

1 Peter 1:20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has **appeared in these last times** for the sake of you

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **in these last days has spoken to us in His Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Offspring of a Virgin's womb

Matthew 1:22-25 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, **the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son**, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but **kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son**; and he called His name Jesus.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see

Hebrews 10:19-20 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through **the veil, that is, His flesh**,

John 1:14 And **the Word became flesh**, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hail the incarnate Deity

Colossians 2:9 For in Him **all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form**,  
Pleased as man with man to dwell

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and **dwelt among us**, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus, our Emmanuel

Matthew 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear A Son, and they shall call His name **Immanuel**,” which translated means, “**God with us.**”

Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

**Verse 3:**

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!

Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, **Prince of Peace.**

Hail the Sun of Righteousness!

Malachi 4:2 “But for you who fear My name, **the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings**; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.”

Light and life to all He brings

Isaiah 9:1-2 But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. **The people who walk**

**in darkness will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.**

John 8:12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “**I am the Light of the world**; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, “**I am the resurrection and the life**; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Ris'n with healing in His wings

Malachi 4:2 “But for you who fear My name, **the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings**; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.”

Mild He lays His glory by

Matthew 11:29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for **I am gentle and humble in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls.

Philippians 2:5-7 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in **Christ Jesus**, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.**

Born that man no more may die

Hebrews 2:14-15 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, **that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.**

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and **everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.** Do you believe this?”

Born to raise the sons of earth

2 Corinthians 4:14 knowing that **He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus** and will present us with you.

Born to give them second birth

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of the time came, **God sent forth His Son**, born of a woman, born under the Law, so **that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

### **Excerpts from Ligon Duncan on *Hark the Herald***

This carol by Charles Wesley, one of the many hundreds of carols that he wrote, is one of the best hymns ever written. It's reckoned by many hymnologists to be among the three or four best hymns ever written. It was certainly one of the most popular hymns in Protestant hymnals in the middle part of the twentieth century. A survey was done of some 60 or 65 different Protestant denominational hymnals, and this particular hymn occurred in almost every single one of them.

When he originally wrote this hymn it came in ten stanzas. Given that I have 26 points to make about the three stanzas in our hymnal, you will be glad to know that our hymnal does not have the original ten stanzas!

But you'll also note that in the very first line it's a little bit different: “Hark, how all the welkin rings.....” The welkin refers not only to the skies and to the celestial world beyond, but to the abode of God. And so when Wesley originally writes, “Hark, how all the welkin rings....” he is speaking of the totality of the inhabited universe giving glory to God, including that part of the universe in which God Himself is the occupant. So it's a beautiful expression of the totality of the universe, the cosmos, and creation. Apparently somewhere along the line, there was someone who said to Wesley, ‘Maybe you want to make that a little more simple, so that us ordinary mortals can understand,’ and it became “Hark! The herald angels sing....”

Notice, in the first stanza, the first four phrases are descriptions to us of the messengers and the message; and the second four phrases in that first stanza are Wesley's exhortations to us as to how we ought to respond to the messengers and the message.

**First, he begins by calling us to hark, as the herald angels sing.** In other words, he's saying listen to these divine messengers, these angels that God has sent as heralds. Listen to what they are saying.

He is, of course, drawing this from Luke 2:13, which tells us that after that angel had told the shepherds what was going on in Bethlehem, that that angel was joined by a multitude of the heavenly host who were praising God; He's asking you to listen carefully to the messengers and to the message that they are bringing.

**And then in the second phrase, he tells you what that message is: "Glory to the newborn King."** In other words, he's saying, 'Listen: those divine messengers, those herald angels, are announcing the birth of a king, who is *the King*. And of course he's basing this on Luke 2:14. This is the message that that host of angels sang before the shepherds.

Then he says "Peace on earth, and mercy mild." Again, he's elaborating on this message that was brought by the angels to the shepherds, and he's telling us that this King's heralds, this King's messengers, are not bringing a message of war, but a message of peace. They're not announcing a message of condemnation and judgment, but a message of mercy.

**Then Wesley explains exactly what kind of peace and mercy he has in mind in the next phrase: "God and sinners reconciled."** That is, that this peace and mercy about which the previous phrase speaks. **This peace and mercy consists in the reconciliation of God and sinners accomplished through the birth of this King.**

**The first four phrases have described for you the messengers and their message; now the next four phrases in stanza one will exhort us to respond to that message.** Notice what Wesley says to us next: "**Joyful, all ye nations, rise....**" **He's saying this: Our response to this kind of a message is to stand up in joyous awe and praise of God.** In the Scriptures, when someone comes into the presence of God, they rise—and very often they take off their shoes, in humble adoration, in awe of the presence of the Almighty God.

**And, join in the joyous awe of the God who has sent this message. "Join the triumph of the skies" is his next phrase. By that he means that all the nations are to join in this triumph of Christ that is being announced in the Palestinian night sky.** Respond to this in faith, in trust, in belief, and join the triumph that is being announced by these angels in the skies.

**“With the angelic host proclaim...” is his next phrase.** He says: Indeed, you’re not only to join with them, but with them in your hearts and voices you are to join those angelic company, and you are to declare what they are declaring.

**And what are they declaring? He tells you in the next phrase: “Christ is born in Bethlehem!” This is the first time he uses the word “Christ,” which is simply the English version of the Greek name for the Old Testament Messiah.** What he is saying is this: that this host is proclaiming that the Messiah has been born for our salvation in the City of David (Bethlehem), just where God had prophesied it more than 600 years beforehand through the prophet Micah.

**So there's the first stanza, chock full of truth. But then we have a refrain, when set to Mendelssohn's beautiful tune. And the refrain is the same phrase as the first two phrases of the first stanza, but now they function a little bit differently.** When we sang them first, we are singing Wesley's description to us of the message and the messengers. **The second time we sing them (and, indeed, each time we sing them from now on in the refrain), we are singing them back to God in response to what Wesley has revealed about Christ, about the message, and about the messengers. Now the refrain serves to express our own praise to God for the glorious gift of the Messiah, and when we sing “Glory to the newborn King!” we are confessing that the focus of our hearts and lives ought to be on giving God glory.**

**Let's look at the second stanza. Wesley begins, “Christ, by highest heaven adored....” The next two stanzas are going to be almost wholly taken up with a focus upon the person and work of Jesus Christ.** “Christ, by highest heaven adored....” What Wesley is asking you to do in the second stanza is consider who it is whose birth is being announced. And he begins by saying, ‘It's the Messiah's birth: Christ.’ But he doesn't stop there. **He says, ‘This Messiah is adored by highest heaven.’ In other words, this Messiah is worshipped by the greatest created beings in the world. He's saying, ‘Think of it! This babe in a manger in Bethlehem has been adored by the greatest created beings that exist. They worship Him: Christ, the everlasting Lord.’** What's he saying? That this Messiah is no mere earthly king; rather, He is the incarnate eternal Lord of the universe.

**Then he goes on to say, “Late in time behold Him come...”** He's saying that now, after many hundreds of years of His people's waiting, at the right time, the time of God's appointment, He has come into this world: **“...offspring of the Virgin's womb.” He's come into this world in the most remarkable way. He's been brought into this world through a young virgin.**

**And then he says, “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see...” In other words, he says when you look at Jesus, when you consider Jesus, in Him you behold the Godhead.** *Godhead*, is an English word that translates a Greek word that has in it the idea of the fullness of deity. *Godhead* refers to the fullness of what it means to be God, and so **when he says “...veiled in flesh the Godhead see...” he means that in Him, in Jesus Christ, you behold the Godhead: the fullness of deity in bodily form.**

**”Hail the incarnate Deity...” is his next phrase.** In other words, he says ‘So when you greet Him, when you hail Him, when you honor Him, when you acclaim Him, when you acknowledge Him; when you do so, **own Him as God in the flesh, as the incarnate Deity.** Own Him as not only the Savior of sinners, but as the Son of God incarnate.

**“Pleased as man with men to dwell...” is his next line. Wesley is saying here that Christ in His mercy has been pleased—that is, He has chosen of His own will—to dwell with us, like us, in a fallen world, as a human being.** You remember in the Old Testament in 2 Samuel 7 when David tells the Lord that he wants to build a temple for Him? And the Lord says to David, ‘David, ever since My people Israel were wandering in the wilderness, leaving Egypt on the way to the land of Canaan...did I ever ask them to build Me a temple? No. I dwelt with them in a tent.’”

They were nomads, they were wandering in the wilderness; and when God commanded a place to be built that would represent His tangible presence with His people, what did He ask for? A tent. It was beautiful; it was expensive; it was elaborate; but it was a tent! And so the Lord says to David, ‘When My people were in tents, I came and dwelled in a big tent right in the middle of them!’ It's a glorious passage, when He says that to David.

**Well, you see, Jesus does something even greater than that. He comes and dwells with us as a human, as the God-man, fully inhabiting our experience, living among us as one of us.** “Pleased as man with men to dwell....”

**And then finally...have you noticed it? It's the first time in this carol that the name “Jesus” is mentioned.** You're all the way into the eighth phrase of the second stanza before it's finally named: **“Jesus, our Emmanuel.”** Oh, you've been introduced to Him as the King and as the Messiah, and as the incarnate Deity; but now His name is given: Jesus. **His name is Jesus, for He's His people's Savior, and He is literally, Wesley reminds us, Emmanuel: God with us.**

Then comes the refrain, and once again **the refrain serves to allow you to express your praise to God for this glorious gift of Jesus Christ, His incarnate Son.**

**Then comes the third stanza, again all about Jesus Christ: “Hail the heavenly Prince of Peace!” Wesley is taking you all the way back to Isaiah 9:6,** where the Messiah is described (among other things) as the Prince of Peace; and he's saying when you hail Jesus– when you acclaim Jesus, when you honor Jesus, acclaim him– acclaim Jesus the Messiah as the Prince of Peace who was prophesied by Isaiah.

**When you hail Jesus, hail Him as the Son of Righteousness, he says in the next phrase. There, he's going back to Malachi 4:2a,** the first part of Malachi 4:2, and Wesley is saying that Jesus the Messiah is the Son of Righteousness prophesied by Malachi.

**And when you hail Jesus, acknowledge that “Light and life to all He brings....”–and of course Wesley is going back to John 1:4,** where John reminds us that He was the light of the world and the life of men–a phrase in John 1:4 that actually goes all the way back to Psalm 27:1, when the psalmist says that “the Lord is my light and my salvation, and He is my life.”

**Then he says “...risen with healing in His wings.”** He's back to Malachi 4:2b this time, the second half of verse 2 where the Son of Righteousness is described as rising with healing in His wings.

**Then in the next phrase, “Mild He lays His glory by...”** Wesley interprets for us Philippians 2:7 as briefly and as accurately as you can do it. “...He emptied Himself and made Himself of no reputation” on our behalf... “Mild He lays His glory by...”

**And then the next three phrases tell you three reasons why Jesus was born. He was born that man no more may die.** In other words, Jesus was born to remove the curse brought by Adam's sin and ours. What was that curse? Paul says, “...the wages of sin is death”, Jesus was born to remove the curse brought by Adam's sin and ours. The wages of sin: death...so “that man no more may die.”

**Secondly, He was “born to raise the sons of earth...”** He was born to raise us to newness of life, as Romans 6 says. He was born to raise us so that we would be resurrected to eternal life, as I Corinthians 15 tells us; **and, He was “born to give them second birth”;**



**that is, Jesus was born that we might be born again, that we might be regenerated, that we might be renewed and transformed.** And then we sing the refrain again.

**Well, there it is: twenty-six points out of the three stanzas of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” We see how packed every phrase, every line of these glorious carols are.**

**Now we turn to the word of God, to Luke 2:13,14...**

“And suddenly three 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.”

### **I. What are the angels busy doing?**

Just three things I want you to see in that very rich passage, and the first thing is this: did you notice what the angels are busying themselves with doing? These angels are busying themselves with the praise of God. The very thought of the incarnation of the Son of God has set these angels singing. They cannot help but praise God.

There's nothing more important than the praise of God, and if that isn't your priority this season, I suggest you adopt an angelic priority: the praise of God.

### **II. The message of redemption is all about God's glory.**

**Now, what were they doing? Well, they were giving us a message, and that message was “Glory to God in the highest”; and that reminds us of a second thing: this message of redemption is all about God's glory. Think of it: God's redemption of His people is all about God's glory.** You know, we can look at this gospel story of Christ's coming in the world, and we can still be man-centered about it. We can think that it's all about us, but the angels are telling us that God's redemption of us is all about His glory; and the reason is because everything is about His glory!

Those of us who've grown up on *The Shorter Catechism* were taught to believe that the chief reason that we are here is to glorify and enjoy God forever. And **these angels are reminding us that even as Jesus comes into the world on a rescue project to save men and women and boys and girls, it's all about God's glory.**

**These angels are announcing that it's all about God's glory. Does our life really say that it's all about God's glory.**

### **III. Peace on earth among men with whom He is pleased.**

Thirdly and finally, notice that very interesting phrase at the end of verse 14: “Peace on earth among men with whom He is pleased.” Now, many of you will remember the King James: “Peace on earth, good will towards men.” But many of you will have other translations in front of you, and they all will say something a little bit different. Some of them will say something like this: “Peace towards those upon whom God's favor rests.” And some will say: “Peace towards men of good will.” And some will say: “Peace towards men with whom God is well pleased.”

It's difficult to know exactly how to translate the phrase, but you see what all of those modern translations are getting at. **This is not a generic announcement. This is an announcement for people who believe the message. It is not that there is peace for everyone. No. Those who are indifferent to this announcement, those who are indifferent to this Christ, to this Savior, there is no peace and joy for them.**

**This peace is only for those on whom God's favor rests, for those who have rested and trusted in Jesus Christ alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel.**