

Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Angels from the Realms of Glory](#)

[Angels We Have Heard on High](#)

[Away in the Manger](#)

[Christians Awake Salute the Happy Morn](#)

[Coventry Carol](#)

[Gabriel's Message](#)

[Go Tell It on the Mountain](#)

[God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman](#)

[Hark The Harold Angels Sing](#)

[In the Bleak Midwinter](#)

[Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming](#)

[Mary's Boy Child](#)

[O Come All Ye Faithful](#)

[O Come O Come Emmanuel](#)

[O Little Town Of Bethlehem](#)

[O Holy Night](#)

[Once in Royal David's City](#)

[Silent Night](#)

[The First Noel](#)

[We Three Kings](#)

[Wexford Carol](#)

[What Child Is This?](#)

[When a Child is Born](#)

[While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks](#)

Theology of Select Christmas Carols

We sing Christmas carols every year around that cold time of the year. When the wind picks up, and the days are shorter, sometimes, if you just listen carefully enough, you can hear the hummings of songs that are hundreds of years old.

But what do these songs mean? Where did they come from? Are they realistic to the Bible, the reason why we even celebrate Christmas in the first place? Read on to learn more about your favorite carols.

Angels from the Realms of Glory

About the Carol

The English poet James Montgomery composed the lyrics to “Angels from the Realms of Glory.” This hymn was originally published on Christmas Eve, 1816, in the Sheffield Register, a newspaper that James Montgomery was the editor of.

Montgomery based this hymnal off of these verses from Luke: 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, good will toward men.
Luke 2:13-14

The last stanza is usually omitted in hymnals (and even this book), but reads as followed:

*Sinners, wrung with true repentance,
Doomed for guilt to endless pains,
Justice now revokes your sentence,
Mercy calls you; break your chains.*

This final stanza completes the progression throughout the hymn. The first stanza is about the angels, the second the shepherds, the third the sages, the fourth the saints, and so this last stanza is about the fifth, the sinners.

Lyrics

*Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!
Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant Light;
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!
Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations,
Ye have seen his natal star;
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!
Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,*

*Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In his temple shall appear:
Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!*

Analysis of Carol

Angels from the realms of glory,

God created angels. They are immortal and not earthly beings, like the humans and animals on Earth. Hence, Angels are from the realms of glory. Throughout the whole hymnal, Montgomery expands his hymn to more groups of people. First it is to the angels.

Wing your flight o'er all the earth;

“Wing” here is used as a verb, but it is a common misconception that all angels have wings. We know for certain that some angels have wings: Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ^{Isaiah 6:2} And we know that angels do fly: And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly. ^{2nd Samuel 22:11}

However, the angels that commonly visited Earth did not have wings. If they did, they would never be mistaken for men: And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son... And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. ^{Judges 13:3, 11} And there came two angels to Sodom at even... And they [Sodomites] called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. ^{Genesis 19:1, 5}

Ye who sang creation's story,

This is a reference to the Lord's answer to Job's questions, where he tells us that the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy: Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?^{Job 38:4, 7}

Now proclaim Messiah's birth:

A reference not only to Gabriel, who was sent by God to Mary,^(Luke 1:26, 27.) but also to the shepherds in the field. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.^{Luke 2:10, 13}

Come and worship,

Come and worship,

Worship Christ, the newborn King!

It is important to note that it is okay to worship Jesus. The Bible makes it clear that we are not to keep idols: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.^{Exodus 20:4, 5} Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.^{Matthew 4:10,}
^{Luke 4:8}

But Jesus is eligible for worship. The wise men knew this when they said to King Herod: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.^{Matthew 2:2}

*Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,*

Now Montgomery has expanded his hymn to include shepherds. These lines are again a reference to the shepherds who were in the field when the choir of Angels praised God: And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 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, good will toward men.
Luke 2:8, 9, 13, 14

God with man is now residing,

This is an accurate statement, Jesus had been born on Earth.

Yonder shines the infant Light;

The light referenced is what we now call the Star of Bethlehem, which is what the wise men were following to find Jesus. Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
Matthew 2:2

And they followed the star to where Jesus was laid: When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
Matthew 2:9, 10

Come and worship,

Come and worship,

Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Sages, leave your contemplations,

Now Montgomery has expanded his hymnal to the sages, who are the wise men. Suddenly, these men were no longer in thought about when the savior would come. He was here now.

Brighter visions beam afar;

Because of the birth of Jesus, the future would look better. Hence, *bright visions beam afar* signals that people can receive hope of a brighter future.

Seek the great desire of nations,

A reference to Haggai, who wrote: And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.^{Haggai 2:7} Here Here Haggai is looking to Jesus's prophetic future when Jesus will rule on Earth. Jesus will fulfill that during his second coming.

Ye have seen his natal star;

Again a reference to the Star of Bethlehem. Perhaps also a warning. The Star has come, people should know that Jesus is born and come to him and seek the great desire of nations.

Come and worship,

Come and worship,

Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Saints before the altar bending,

Last, Montgomery is expanding his hymnal to include saints, or believers in Jesus Christ.

Watching long in hope and fear,

Today the intense watching and waiting for Jesus to come back is still occurring. We have been doing as Jesus instructed for nearly two thousand years: *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* ^{Matthew 24:42} It is hope for the Saints, who long for Jesus's return, and it is fear for the unbelievers, when they realize the coming judgment.

Suddenly the Lord, descending,

And when Jesus returns, it will be a sudden event that all will know about: *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.* ^{Matthew 24:27} That is why Jesus tells us not to believe people who claim to have seen him: *Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.* ^{Matthew 24:26}

In his temple shall appear:

Unfortunately, there is no biblical support that Jesus will appear in a temple on his return. In fact, we are told that after all is done and Jesus has given all the judgments and rewards, that there will be no temple. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. ^{Revelation 21:22} The subject of the temple is an engaging thought, as the Jewish people in Israel today are desperate to build the third temple. However, this political thought would not have been common when Montgomery wrote this hymn in 1816. Israel was not yet again a country at that time. We can only ponder what thoughts Montgomery had for this line.

*Come and worship,
Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!*

Angels We Have Heard on High

About the Carol

While we do not know the author of “Angels We Have Heard on High,” we know that it was translated from the French “*Anges Dans Nos Campagnes*” by Bishop James Chadwick in 1860. The hymn, in the French version, was first published by the Diocese of Quebec in 1819, in the *Nouveau recueil de cantiques*, or ‘New Hymnal.’

The original hymn in French was eight stanzas, with communication between the shepherds, the angels, and the women in all eight stanzas, but James Chadwick shortened this down to four stanzas in English.

Lyrics

*Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Come to Bethlehem and see
Him Whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
See him in a manger laid
Jesus Lord of heaven and earth;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
With us sing our Savior's birth.*

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Analysis of Carol

This song is a simple retelling of the shepherds' tale as found in Luke 2:8-20. The angels came and proclaimed to the shepherds that the Messiah had come! It is possible that the hymn is the shepherds recounting their tale, as recorded in Luke: And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child... And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. ^{Luke 2:17, 20}

*Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains*

For these two lines, the shepherds are recounting how they heard of the birth of the Messiah: 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, good will toward men. ^{Luke 2:13, 14}

*And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains*

And here, the hymnist is claiming the song was so loud, it echoed off the nearby mountains. This is unfounded in the New Testament, however it is not meant to be taken literally. Rather, this line shows that the earth was symbolically taking part of the celebration.

*Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

Translated from Latin, these lines mean "Glory to God in the highest." This is what the choir of angels sang to praise God. 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, good will toward men.
Luke 2:13, 14

Shepherds: why this jubilee?

Here, the Shepherds are speaking. “Why this jubilee?” This simple question could have a couple different meanings: First, a Jubilee was the fiftieth year, and was a time when slaves were freed, and land was returned to their former owners. Thus, this was a time of celebration and rejoicing. Some believe that Jesus was born on a Jubilee year. Second, and the intended meaning by the author, a “jubilee” is a great public joy. The angels absolutely showed this by praising God in a choir to the shepherds.

Why your joyous strains prolong?

What the gladsome tidings be

Which inspire your heavenly song?

The shepherds are still questioning the angels, “Why are you singing a wholesome, heavenly song?” And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
Luke 2:10

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see

Him Whose birth the angels sing;

And the angels respond: “Come and see:”

Indeed, the angel said to the shepherds: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
Luke 2:11, 12

*Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.*

This is not recorded, but we know that the shepherds went to see Jesus: And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
Luke 2:15, 16

*Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

*See him in a manger laid
Jesus Lord of heaven and earth;*

And the shepherds did: And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
Luke 2:16

*Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
With us sing our Savior's birth.*

The shepherds are not recorded as ever saying this to Mary and Joseph, and it is doubtful that Mary would have, for Luke recorded: But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.
Luke 2:19

*Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

Away in A Manger

About the Carol

“Away in A Manger” was traditionally thought to have been written by Martin Luther, however this claim has come into doubt. The German version of the song seems to be translated from the English, because the meter of the song is not natural to German. The author of the first two verses is not known, but the third verse, a prayer, was added later to the song in *Gabriel’s Vineyard Songs*, published 1892.

Fred Gaely (1894-1976) believed that “Away in a Manger” was a completely American hymn, originating from German Lutherans in Pennsylvania around 1885. Around that time the hymn appeared in *Little Children’s Book for Schools and Families*, published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America for Sunday School.

Lyrics

*Away in a manger no crib for a bed
The little lord jesus laid down his sweet head
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay
The little lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
The cattle are lowing the baby awakes
But little lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you lord Jesus; look down from the sky
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.
Be near me lord Jesus I ask you to stay
Close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
And fit us for heaven, to live with you there.*

Analysis of Carol

Away in a manger no crib for a bed

Just as Luke records, And she [Mary] brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. ^{Luke 2:7}

However, many people do not know the reason Jesus was born in a manger. The answer is simple: the Romans were conducting a census and demanded them to be in Bethlehem. And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ^{Luke 2:1-5}

As it so happens, baby Jesus was ready to be born. Every mother knows that you cannot delay giving birth. It happens when it happens: And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ^{Luke 2:6} Since there was a census, Bethlehem was filled up. The inn did not have room for Joseph and Mary, so they laid Jesus in the manger.

*The little lord Jesus laid down his sweet head
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay
The little lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

We do not know for certain if Jesus lay in hay or straw, but that is not the point of these lines. Here, the author is showing how humble Jesus's birth was. This is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, laying in the hay. This shows that Jesus is always approachable, he is not guarded by gates, doors, walls, or guards. He understands the plight of the poor, as even his earthly family could not provide a bed for him. It is as Jesus said, *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head* ^{Matthew} 8:20 cf. Luke 9:58

The cattle are lowing the baby awakes

It logically follows that if Jesus and his family are in a manger, then barn animals are nearby.

But little lord Jesus no crying he makes.

this is an interesting line, however there is nothing recorded in the Bible about this. But it makes sense that as perfect human being, even as a babe, Jesus would show peace and bring about peace to his surroundings. That is the point that the author is trying to get across. However, if Jesus could cry as an adult, ^{John 11:35} then he could probably cry as a little babe.

More interesting is the fact that the gospels do not record Jesus as ever doing the opposite of crying. That is to say, Jesus never laughed.

*I love you lord Jesus; look down from the sky
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.*

A wonderful request asking for our Lord to give us attention.

*Be near me lord Jesus I ask you to stay
Close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.*

Another wonderful request, the author truly believes that Jesus answers prayers. Of course, this may not be the most biblical thing. Jesus never once said to prayer to him, only to ask in his name, and even when that happens, Jesus will not pray on our behalf. *In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf.* ^{John 16:26} He explains that it is not necessary, because God loves us.

Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
Jesus cared deeply about children. *Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.* ^{Matthew 19:14}

And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. ^{Mark 9:42}

And of course, child have their angels which look after them specifically. *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.* ^{Matthew 18:10}

And fit us for heaven, to live with you there.
And to make us fit for Heaven, Jesus tells us, *Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* ^{Matthew 18:3}

This process is not likely nice, as Jesus purges the branches that bear fruit so they may bear more. *Every branch in me that beareth not*

fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ^{John 15:2}

Purging, or in more modern English, pruning branches, is not a nice process for the branch. It is literally the cutting off of pieces of the plant! It is fallacious to believe that Jesus would want us to have an easy life on Earth (especially when we consider will we have an eternity in heaven) when he directly says otherwise.

We should not forget that he is the good shepherd. ^{John 10:1-21}

However, even the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the field to find one lost sheep. ^{Luke 15:4-7}

What happens to the ninety-nine in the field? They are left to tend for themselves, but at least they know what their master wants. For them to stay put. Likewise, even if Jesus is not pruning us, we can still know what he wants. He wants us to do the will of God. ^{Matthew 7:21}

Jesus even gets frustrated when people say they do, but in actuality do not. ^{Luke 6:46}

Christians Awake Salute the Happy Morn

About the Carol

John Byrom wrote “Christians Awake Salute the Happy Morn” (1692-1763). During his life, Byrom did not seek much respect as a writer. It was only after his death that his writings were published, once in 1773, and a more complete edition in 1814.

Lyrics

*Christians, awake, salute the happy morn
Whereon the Savior of the world was born
Rise to adore the mystery of love
Which hosts of angels chanted from above
With them the joyful tidings first begun
Of God incarnate and the virgin's Son.
Then to the watchful shepherds it was told
Who heard th'angelic herald's voice: "Behold
I bring good tidings of a Savior's birth
To you and all the nations of the earth
This day hath God fulfilled his promised Word;
This day is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord."
He spake, and straightaway the celestial choir
In hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire
The praises of redeeming love they sang
And Heaven's whole orb with alleluias rang
God's highest glory was their anthem still.
Peace on the earth and unto men good will.
To Bethlehem straight the enlightened shepherds ran
To see the wonder God had wrought for man
And found, with Joseph and the blessed maid
Her Son, the Saviour, in a manger laid*

*Then to their flocks, still praising God, return
And their glad hearts with holy rapture burn.*

*Like Mary let us ponder in our mind
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind!
Trace we the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss,
From his poor manger to his bitter cross,
Tread in his steps, assisted by his grace,
Till man's first heav'nly state again takes place.
Then may we hope, the angelic hosts among,
To sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song.
He that was born upon this joyful day
Around us all his glory shall display.
Saved by his love, incessantly we sing
Eternal praise to Heaven's almighty King.*

Analysis of Carol

*Christians, awake, salute the happy morn
Whereon the Savior of the world was born*

December 25th is as good a day as any to praise the birth of Jesus, especially since we do not know the exact day of his birth.

Rise to adore the mystery of love

The Bible speaks a lot about love, but it never says that love is a mystery. This line is completely made up by the author.

*Which hosts of angels chanted from above
With them the joyful tidings first begun*

A reference to the choir of angels who praised God before the shepherds. 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, good will toward men.
Luke 2:13, 14

Of God incarnate and the virgin's Son

We know that Jesus is Lord for plenty of reasons, but the best is that Jesus did not correct Thomas' assertion: And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, **Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.**
John 20:28, 29a

Isaiah might also have recorded that Jesus was to be born of a virgin. Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
Isaiah 7:14

However, there is some discussion that the Hebrew word for "virgin" in Isaiah's verse was supposed to mean "maiden" instead.

*Then to the watchful shepherds it was told
Who heard th'angelic herald's voice: "Behold*

*I bring good tidings of a Savior's birth
To you and all the nations of the earth
This day hath God fulfilled his promised Word;
This day is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord."*

While not quite what the angel said, this is really close. The exact record is, And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 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, good will toward men. Luke 2:10-14

*He spake, and straightaway the celestial choir
In hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire
The praises of redeeming love they sang
And Heaven's whole orb with alleluias rang*

Unfortunately, it is not recorded whether all of heaven was filled with hallelujahs.

*God's highest glory was their anthem still.
Peace on the earth and unto men good will*

These lines are pretty close to what is recorded in Luke. 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, good will toward men. Luke 2:13, 14

*To Bethlehem straight the enlightened shepherds ran
To see the wonder God had wrought for man*

*And found, with Joseph and the blessed maid
Her Son, the Saviour, in a manger laid*

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven,
the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and
see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto
us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe
lying in a manger. Luke 2:15, 16

*Then to their flocks, still praising God, return
And their glad hearts with holy rapture burn.*

The author has taken some artistic liberties with this Christmas
passage, but once again, these lines match up close enough. And the
shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they
had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. Luke 2:20

*Like Mary let us ponder in our mind
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind!*

It is not known if "God's love" was what Mary was pondering, the
Bible only records, But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in
her heart. Luke 2:19

Luke uses this terminology one more time, when Mary and Joseph
lost track of Jesus, and find him in the Temple. And [Jesus] said unto
them, *How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my
Father's business?* And they understood not the saying which he spake unto
them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject
unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. Luke 2:49-51

It is just as likely that Mary was pondering how difficult it would be to raise a king as a child, rather than pondering about God's love for humanity.

*Trace we the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss,
From his poor manger to his bitter cross,
Tread in his steps, assisted by his grace,
Till man's first heav'nly state again takes place.*

This last line references the resurrection. Jesus speaks about it quite a bit, but two verses record him saying, **But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.**

Luke 20:35, 36

*Then may we hope, the angelic hosts among,
To sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song.
He that was born upon this joyful day
Around us all his glory shall display.
Saved by his love, incessantly we sing
Eternal praise to Heaven's almighty King.*

Coventry Carol

About the Carol

This hymn originates from the 1500s and was part of a play performed in Coventry, England. Hence its name, “Coventry Carol.”

Since before the 1200s plays called “Mystery Plays” became popular in England. Despite the name, “mystery” is not a reference to an actual “mystery,” but to the “mysterious” nature of miracles.

In many towns, there would be plays of various Biblical stories throughout the year, from the creation of the world to the coming judgment. Coventry was one of the bigger towns having these plays, however many of the plays were lost because of the nature of history and persecutions in later centuries, particularly when England changed from Catholic to Protestant.

“Coventry Carol” was one play that survived, due to a manuscript dating back to 1591. Originally, this was part of a play called *The Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors*, which speaks about the nativity, the announcement of Christ, and finally to the massacre of the innocents, the subject of this carol.

Lyrics

*Lully, lullay, Thou little tiny child,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.
Lullay, thou little tiny child,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.
O sisters too, how may we do,
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling for whom we do sing,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.
Herod, the king, in his raging,
Charged he hath this day
His men of might, in his own sight,
All children young to slay.
That woe is me, poor Child for Thee!
And ever mourn and sigh,
For thy parting neither say nor sing,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.*

Analysis of Carol

*Lully, lullay, Thou little tiny child,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.*

‘Lully’ and ‘lullay’ both share the same root as the word ‘lull,’ which means to put to sleep or rest by soothing. It’s the same root as in the word ‘lullaby,’ which is what this song really is: a lullaby about the circumstances of Jesus’s birth.

*Lullay, thou little tiny child,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.*

This stanza merely tells us the subject of the carol, that little tiny child. Despite this carol being in a book about Christmas Carols, this child is not Jesus.

*O sisters too, how may we do,
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling for whom we do sing,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.*

The singer of this song is a poor mother, who has a child. She is asking her sisters how to “preserve” this day - how to keep or save from injury, this day. Then she explains why she wants to preserve the day for her poor youngling.

*Herod, the king, in his raging,
Charged he hath this day
His men of might, in his own sight,
All children young to slay.*

Now we come to the Biblical crux of the story, Herod’s mad slaying of children: Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise

men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.
Matthew 2:16

The poor mother singing this song is sad that her child is destined to die. She knows nothing of Jesus, only the harsh reality that her child will die. Jesus's birth did not bring peace to Bethlehem. Wise was Jesus to say, *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*
Matthew 10:34

*That woe is me, poor Child for Thee!
And ever mourn and sigh,
For thy parting neither say nor sing,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.*

Gabriel's Message

About the Carol

“Gabriel’s Message” is also known as “The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came.” Originally, this carol was a Basque folk carol, which is a region somewhat between Spain and France on the western coast. “Gabriel’s Message” was originally written in Basque, but was translated into English by Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924).

Lyrics

*The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame,
All hail, said he, thou lowly maiden Mary!
Most highly favored Lady, Gloria!
For known a blessed mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee,
Thy son shall be Emmanuel by seers foretold,
Most highly favored Lady, Gloria!
Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
“To me be as it pleaseth God,” she said,
“my soul shall laud and magnify his holy Name.”
Most highly favored Lady, Gloria!
Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born
in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
Most highly favored Lady, Gloria!*

Analysis of Carol

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,

His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame,

There is no description given of Gabriel, however other angelic beings have been noted for having eyes as flame. However, the wings are even worse, as angelic beings in the Bible rarely have wings. It is only the seraphim that do, ^(Isaiah 6:2.) the typical angel does not. If the typical angel did, then no one would confuse them with ordinary men. ^(Such as what happened with Lot. See Genesis 19:1-11.)

All hail, said he, thou lowly maiden Mary!

Most highly favored Lady, Gloria!

For known a blessed mother thou shalt be,

All generations laud and honour thee,

Thy son shall be Emmanuel by seers foretold,

Isaiah said this, not Gabriel. ^(Isaiah 7:14.) Rather, Gabriel said: And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. ^{Luke 1:31}

Most highly favored Lady, Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,

“To me be as it pleaseth God,” she said,

“my soul shall laud and magnify his holy Name.”

Well, it did not occur quite like this. Mary first had a technical question, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? ^{Luke 1:34} This is a fair question. If Mary was a virgin, then how could she be pregnant?

It is only when Gabriel explained how she would conceive that Mary accepted it as fact.

Most highly favored Lady, Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born

The name “Emmanuel” is used a few times here, in relation to the Isaiah prophecy. However, very few people call Jesus “Emmanuel.” Matthew, however, resolves the conundrum for us by interpreting the name. Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Matthew 1:23

*in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
Most highly favored Lady, Gloria!*

Go Tell It On the Mountain

About the Carol

Compiled by John Wesley Work, Jr. (1871-1915), “Go Tell It On the Mountain” is an African-American carol celebrating the birth of Jesus.

Lyrics

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*While shepherds kept their watching
over silent flocks by night,
behold throughout the heavens,
there shone a holy light.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo! above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Saviour's birth.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*Down in a lowly manger
our humble Christ was born,*

*and God sent us salvation,
that blessed Christmas morn.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*When I am a seeker,
I seek both night and day.*

*I seek the Lord to help me,
and he shows me the way.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*He made me a watchman
upon the city wall,*

*and if I am a Christian,
I am the least of all.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

Analysis of Carol

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*While shepherds kept their watching
over silent flocks by night,
behold throughout the heavens,
there shone a holy light.*

And, if the author is trying to be Biblically correct, that light was not the Star of Bethlehem, as the shepherds did not see that star.

Rather, it was the light from all the angels.

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo! above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Saviour's birth.*

Well, the choir sang praise to God, ^(Luke 2:13, 14.) but close enough.

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*Down in a lowly manger
our humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation,*

An interesting line, as there was already salvation on the Earth
through the law of Moses. Jesus came to earth to fulfill the law,
(Matthew 5:17.)

and he did. It is still through that law that we find
salvation, just by a different means.

that blessed Christmas morn.

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*When I am a seeker,
I seek both night and day.
I seek the Lord to help me,
and He shows me the way.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

*He made me a watchman
upon the city wall,
and if I am a Christian,
I am the least of all.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman

About the Carol

“God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen” is a traditional English carol, also known as the “Tidings of Comfort and Joy.” The earliest known printed date of the carol dates back to 1760, but it is believed to have existed since before the 16th century.

Lyrics

*God rest ye merry, gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember, Christ, our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy
In Bethlehem, in Israel
This blessed Babe was born
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn
The which his Mother Mary
Did nothing take in scorn
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy
From God our Heavenly Father
A blessed Angel came
And unto certain Shepherds
Brought tidings of the same*

*How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by Name
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy
"Fear not then", said the Angel
"Let nothing you affright
This day is born a Saviour
Of a pure Virgin bright
To free all those who trust in him
From Satan's power and might"
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy
The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm and wind
And went to Bethlehem straightway
The Son of God to find
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

*And when they came to Bethlehem
Where our dear Saviour lay
They found him in a manger
Where oxen feed on hay
His Mother Mary kneeling down
Unto the Lord did pray
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy
Now to the Lord sing praises
All you within this place
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace
This holy tide of Christmas
All other doth deface
O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

Analysis of Carol

*God rest ye merry, gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember, Christ, our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day*

Christmas Day was formed based on Christ's birth. Jesus did not just happen to be born on Christmas, Jesus is the whole reason for Christmas!

*To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray*

True enough, as Mark records Jesus saying, *They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*
Mark 2:17

*O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

In Bethlehem, in Israel

Asides from prophecy, Jesus was born in Bethlehem because Augustus wanted to tax the people. His family needed to go to Bethlehem to be properly registered.
(See Luke 2:1, 4.)

*This blessed Babe was born
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn
The which his Mother Mary
Did nothing take in scorn*

Correct, Mary was thrilled to conceive Jesus. She even sang a song when she learned of that fact. (Luke 1:46-56.)

*O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

*From God our Heavenly Father
A blessed Angel came
And unto certain Shepherds
Brought tidings of the same
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by Name*

*O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy
"Fear not then", said the Angel
"Let nothing you affright
This day is born a Saviour*

These are the two lines the angel said, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ^{Luke 2:10, 11}

*Of a pure Virgin bright
To free all those who trust in him
From Satan's power and might"*

The angel did not say these lines. Besides the virgin comment, the idea that Jesus frees those who trust in him from Satan's power and might does not come from Jesus. It comes from the New Testament

writers. Jesus actually says, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*
Matthew 11:28, 29

He also mentioned that obtaining eternal life may cause some familial strife: *Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.*
Mark 10:29-31

*O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

*The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm and wind*

A little bit of an exaggeration. We do not know the weather conditions. It is still a pleasant touch for the story.

*And went to Bethlehem straightway
The Son of God to find*

*O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

*And when they came to Bethlehem
Where our dear Saviour lay
They found him in a manger
Where oxen feed on hay
His Mother Mary kneeling down
Unto the Lord did pray*

*O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort
O tidings of comfort and joy*

*Now to the Lord sing praises
All you within this place
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace
This holy tide of Christmas
All other doth deface*

*O tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

Hark! The Harold Angels Sing

About the Carol

“Hark! The Harold Angels Sing” was first published in 1739 by Charles Wesley (1707-1788) as “Hark, How all the Welkin Rings.” It was not until 1753 when George Whitefield (1714-1770) altered the first two lines into what we know today.

Lyrics

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”*

*Joyful, all ye nations rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th’ angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”*

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”
Christ, by highest heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th’ incarnate Deity,
pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.*

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”
Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,*

risen with healing in his wings.

*Mild he lays his glory by,
born that man no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth,
born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”
Come, Desire of nations, come,
fix in us thy humble home;
rise, the woman’s conquering Seed,
bruise in us the serpent’s head.
Adam’s likeness, Lord, efface;
stamp thine image in its place.
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in thy love.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”
Adam’s likeness, Lord, efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place:
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in Thy love.
Let us Thee, though lost, regain,
Thee, the Life, the inner man:
O, to all Thyself impart,*

Formed in each believing heart.

Hark! the herald angels sing,

“Glory to the new born King!”

Analysis of Carol

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th’ angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”*

*Christ, by highest heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail th’ incarnate Deity,*

Jesus is Lord and shows the way to the Father. *If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*
John 14:7

pleased as man with man to dwell,

And Jesus was human, so much so that John writes that this is a distinguishing feature of the Spirit of God, Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.
1st John 4:2

*Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,*

“Glory to the new born King!”

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Yes, Jesus was born on Earth, but he was in heaven before he was on Earth. That is why Jesus is able to say, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*
John 5:58

Hail the Son of Righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings,

True. Jesus said, *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*
John 8:12

risen with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by,

born that man no more may die,

This is a tricky line. We cannot interpret it to mean that there is no more death on Earth, as people are still dying. Instead, it should be interpreted as saying that Jesus is bringing eternal life. *Even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*
John 3:14, 15

born to raise the sons of earth,

born to give us second birth.

Another truth. This is why Jesus said to Nicodemus, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*
John 3:3

Hark! the herald angels sing,

“Glory to the new born King!”

*Come, Desire of nations, come,
fix in us thy humble home;*

The term “Desire of Nations” comes from a prophecy in Haggai, who wrote, And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.^{Haggai 2:7}

*rise, the woman's conquering Seed,
bruise in us the serpent's head.*

This is in reference to perhaps the first prophecy in the Bible, spoken of by God to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.^{Genesis 3:15}

*Adam's likeness, Lord, efface;
stamp thine image in its place.
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in thy love.*

It's possible the author is speaking about the restriction here, when we will all be given glorified bodies. John wrote about this as well, Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.^{1st John 3:2}

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”*

*Adam's likeness, Lord, efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place:
Second Adam from above,*

*Reinstate us in Thy love.
Let us Thee, though lost, regain,
Thee, the Life, the inner man:
O, to all Thyself impart,
Formed in each believing heart.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new born King!”*

In the Bleak Midwinter

About the Carol

“In the Bleak Midwinter” was written as a poem by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) in 1872 when the magazine Scribner’s Monthlys requested Christmas poems. The poem caught the attention of the public, and two musicians, Gustav Holst (1874-1934) and Harold Darke (1888-1976) both wrote a melody to sing the poem to.

Lyrics

*In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.*

*Our God, Heaven cannot hold him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.*

*Enough for him, whom cherubim
Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for him, whom angels
Fall down before,*

*The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.*

*Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air,
But only his mother
In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the Beloved
With a kiss.*

*What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man
I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give him,
Give my heart.*

Analysis of Carol

*In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.*

We do not know when Jesus was born, whether it was during the day, or the night, during the summer, or the winter. All we can be certain of is that he was born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger.

*Our God, Heaven cannot hold him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When he comes to reign:*

These lines can be interpreted as saying. "Heaven cannot contain Jesus," but that is not quite correct. The author is trying to focus on what happens when Jesus comes back to reign. After his millennial reign, ^(Revelations 20:2-6.) Jesus will judge the dead and the angels ^(Revelations 20:7-15.) and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ^{Revelation 21:1}

*In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.*

*Enough for him, whom cherubim
Worship night and day,*

It is not recorded in the Bible whether cherubim specifically are worshipping Jesus, however we know that the cherubim do the work and will of God. (See Ezekiel 1 and 10 for more details regarding these angelic beings.)

*A breastful of milk
And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for him, whom angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.*

Angels and archangels

There is only one archangel mentioned in the Bible: Michael. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. ^{Jude 1:9} There is no indication that any other archangel exists.

*May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air,
But only his mother
In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the Beloved
With a kiss.*

*What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man
I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give him,
Give my heart.*

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

About the Carol

Originally, “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” was known as the German song *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*. The German version was first published by an unknown author in the 16th century. It was translated several times into English, but the most well-known translation is by Theodore Baker (1851-1934) in 1894.

Lyrics

*Lo, how a rose e'er blooming,
From tender stem hath sprung.
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
As men of old have sung;
It came, a flow'ret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.
Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The Rose I have in mind,
With Mary we behold it,
The virgin mother kind;
To show God's love aright,
She bore to men a Savior,
When half spent was the night.
O Flower, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispel with glorious splendour
The darkness everywhere;
True man, yet very God,
From Sin and death now save us,
And share our every load.*

Analysis of Carol

*Lo, how a rose e'er blooming,
From tender stem hath sprung.
Of Jesse's lineage coming,*

Jesse, like his son King David, is the subject of a few prophecies concerning Jesus. Isaiah writes, And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.

Isaiah 11:1-3

*As men of old have sung;
It came, a flow'ret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,*

We do not know if Jesus was born during winter, however it is unlikely. The reason Mary and Joseph were even in Bethlehem was because Caesar Augustus wanted to tax them. It is unlikely that Caesar would want his subjects to travel during winter, which could expose some risk to the elderly or those with children.

When half spent was the night.

The New Testament writers did not record when Mary gave birth. From tradition, believe that Jesus was born during nighttime.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,

Isaiah prophesied, Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name

Isaiah 7:14
Immanuel.

*The Rose I have in mind,
With Mary we behold it,
The virgin mother kind;*

Most English translations say that Mary was a virgin. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. Luke 1:27

To show God's love aright,

The reason why God sent Jesus was because of his love for us. **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** John 3:16

*She bore to men a Savior,
When half spent was the night.*

*O Flower, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispel with glorious splendour
The darkness everywhere;*

Simeon was told by the Holy Spirit that he would see the Messiah before seeing death. Luke 2:25, 26 When Simeon saw Jesus, he picked him up and said, For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. Luke 2:30-32

John also testifies that Jesus is light. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 1st John 1:5

True man, yet very God,

Jesus is both man and Lord. Otherwise, Jesus would have rebuked Thomas when he replied, My Lord and my God,^{John 20:28} to Jesus. And Jesus is man, else John would not have written, Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.^{1st John 4:2, 3}

From Sin and death now save us,

Jesus is the only way to be redeemed from sin. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.^{1st John 1:7} Jesus is the way unto life eternal. He said of himself, *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*^{John 3:15}

And share our every load.

While we are still responsible for what we are responsible for, Jesus is willing to share our load if we will share his. Jesus offers us his yoke. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*^{Matthew 11:28-30}

Mary's Boy Child

About the Carol

“Mary’s Boy Child” is a relatively recent carol written by Jester Hairston (1901-2000) in 1956. When Harry Belafonte (born 1927) heard the song, he recorded it and released it as a single. It was the first single to sell over a million copies in the United Kingdom alone.

Lyrics

*Long time ago in Bethlehem
So the Holy Bible say
Mary's Boy Child, Jesus Christ
Was born on Christmas Day!
While shepherds watched their flocks by night
They saw a bright new shining star
And heard a choir from heaven sing
The music came from afar
Hark! Now hear the angels sing: n
"New King's born today
And man will live for evermore
Because of Christmas Day!"
Now Joseph and his wife Mary
Came to Bethlehem that night.
They found no place to bear her Child,
Not a single room was in sight.
Hark! Now hear the angels sing:
"New King's born today
And man will live for evermore
Because of Christmas Day!"
By and by they found a little nook
In a stable all forlorn.*

*And in a manger cold and dark
Mary's little Boy Child was born
Trumpets sound and angels sing,
Listen to what they say!
That man will live forevermore
Because of Christmas Day!*

Analysis of Carol

*Long time ago in Bethlehem
So the Holy Bible say
Mary's Boy Child, Jesus Christ
Was born on Christmas Day!*

While the Bible does not say that Jesus was born on Christmas Day, it tells the tale of Jesus's birth. That tale is where the holiday of Christmas comes from. So this stanza is technically incorrect, but spiritually correct.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night
An allusion to the shepherds in Luke 2:8-20.

They saw a bright new shining star
The shepherds did not see the star, rather they learned about Jesus's whereabouts from the angel who said, Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger... And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. ^{Luke 2:12, 15}

*And heard a choir from heaven sing
The music came from afar*
We do not know if there was music when the angelic choir sang, all we know is what this verse gives us: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God. ^{Luke 2:13}

*Hark! Now hear the angels sing:
"New King's born today*

*And man will live for evermore
Because of Christmas Day!"*

This is not what the choir sang. All they said was, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Now, the singular angel who spoke to the shepherds did say "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." ^{Luke 2:11} They said nothing regarding everlasting life.

*Now Joseph and his wife Mary
Came to Bethlehem that night.*

Mary and Joseph were already in Bethlehem, they did not come to Bethlehem specifically for Mary to give birth to Jesus. Furthermore, Mary gave birth before the angels sang to the shepherds.

*They found no place to bear her Child,
Not a single room was in sight.*

True. Luke records, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." ^{Luke 2:7}

*Hark! Now hear the angels sing:
"New King's born today
And man will live for evermore
Because of Christmas Day!"*

*By and by they found a little nook
In a stable all forlorn.
And in a manger cold and dark
Mary's little Boy Child was born*

Since we do not know if Jesus was born during the day or during the night, or during the warm months or during the cold months, this stanza is speculative.

*Trumpets sound and angels sing,
Listen to what they say!
That man will live forevermore
Because of Christmas Day!*

O Come, All Ye Faithful

About the Carol

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” is a carol dating from the 18th century. It existed first in the Latin as “*Adeste Fideles*.” The Catholic priest Frederick Oakeley (1802-1880) translated it to English in 1841.

Lyrics

*O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him,
Born the King of Angels;
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.
O Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy word.
Give to our Father glory in the Highest;
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.
All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
O Jesus! for evermore be Thy name adored.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,*

*O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

Analysis of Carol

This carol is excessively repetitive, so there is not much to analyze that either is not repeated, or has not been said half a dozen times already.

*O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.*

Yes, come indeed! Augustus wants us counted so he can tax us. (Luke 2:1.)

*Come and behold him,
Born the King of Angels;
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

*O Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy word.
Give to our Father glory in the Highest;
O come, let us adore him,*

*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

*All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,*

O Jesus! for evermore be Thy name adored.

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;

It is amazing just how literal that last line is. The author of the fourth gospel recorded, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. ^{John 1:1, 14.}

And of course, Jesus spoke nothing that was his own, only what the Lord told him to. He told us, *For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.* ^{John 12:49}

O Come O Come Emmanuel

About the Carol

This carol was originally written in Latin, titled “*Veni, veni, Emmanuel.*” It is unknown when exactly the Latin version originated, but it is believed to have been first documented in Germany in 1710. In 1861, John Mason Neale (1818-1866) translated the Latin into the English we know today.

Lyrics

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
And drive away the shades of night
And pierce the clouds and bring us light!
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.*

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,

Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height

In ancient times once gave the law

In cloud, and majesty, and awe.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

shall come to thee, O Israel.

Analysis of Carol

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,*

That is one of the reasons why Jesus came to Earth. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.
Matthew 20:28 cf. Mark 10:45

*That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
Isaiah 11:1

*Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
And drive away the shades of night
And pierce the clouds and bring us light!*

Another reference to being the light, so have another verse about the Lord being light. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.
Psalm 104:2

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Key of David, come,

This references this verse: And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut,

and none shall open. ^{Isaiah 22:22} The Book of Revelation invokes this key as well. These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. ^{Revelation 3:7}

And open wide our heavenly home;

Everyone wishes that none would perish. However, Jesus tells us the truth, *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* ^{Matthew 7:14}

Make safe the way that leads on high,

Unfortunately, Jesus makes no attempt to say that he will secure the way, and make it safe. He says the opposite, in his Parable of the Sower, where he explains why some people lose faith. *Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.* ^{Matthew 13:21.} For the full parable see Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23, Mark 4:3-20.

Jesus also says, *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* ^{John 15:2} We should not assume that believing in Jesus will cause our lives to be easier.

*And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times once gave the law*

There are some people who believe Moses made up the law. This is not so. And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. ^{Exodus 31:18 cf. Deuteronomy 9:10}

In cloud, and majesty, and awe.

This majestic showing also caused a little bit of fear as well. And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. ^{Exodus 19:16}

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O Little Town of Bethlehem

About the Carol

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” was first written by Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) in 1868. He was inspired to write the lyrics after visiting Bethlehem in 1865, which was then in the Sanjak of Jerusalem in the Ottoman Empire.

Lyrics

*O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight
For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth
How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
But in this world of sin,*

*Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.
O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born to us today
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel*

Analysis of Carol

*O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light*

True. Jesus said, *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*
John 9:5

*The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight*

*For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep*

While we do not know when Jesus was born, we know that the angels visited the shepherds at night. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
Luke 2:8

*Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together*

The morning stars sang at the creation of the world, and there is little doubt that they would sing at the birth of Jesus. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?
Job 38:4, 7

*Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth*

It is interesting that angels and men sing about Jesus bringing peace to men on earth when he said, *Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.* Luke 12:51

*How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.*

Except this is not necessarily true. If it were, the New Testament writers would not write, *Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.* James 5:8 Or *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.* 1st Peter 3:15

No ear may hear his coming,
Contrary to this line, Jesus's second coming will be obvious. *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.* Matthew 24:27

*But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still,*
Jesus did say in the Sermon on the Mount, *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.* Matthew 5:5

The dear Christ enters in.

*O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray*

Jesus ascended to heaven on a cloud, and he will descend from heaven back to us. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.
Acts 1:9-11

*Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born to us today*

Is the author thinking Jesus will come again through birth? As covered above, this would be incorrect.

*We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel*

O Holy Night

About the Carol

“O Holy Night” originally referred to the music composed by Adolphe Adam (1803-1856) in 1847, to the French poem “Minuit, chrétiens” (Midnight, Christians). “*Minuit, chrétiens*” was originally written by Placide Cappeau (1808-1877).

Lyrics

*O holy night! The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til he appears and the Soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn
Fall on your knees; O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night, O holy night, O night divine!
Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming
With glowing hearts by his cradle we stand
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming
Here come the Wise Men from Orient land
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger
In all our trials born to be our friend
He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger
Behold your King; before him lowly bend
Behold your King; before him lowly bend
Truly he taught us to love one another;
His law is love and his gospel is peace
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother
And in his name all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we*

*Let all within us praise his holy name
Christ is the Lord; O praise his name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim
his power and glory evermore proclaim*

Analysis of Carol

*O holy night! The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining*

This is at most half true. Even when Jesus was born, there were people who were still righteous and blameless before the law. John the Baptist's parents were some of them. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. ^{Luke 1:6} However, most people in the world were incapable of following the law. Thus, it is true to say the world was in sin and error.

*'Til he appears and the Soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn
Fall on your knees; O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night, O holy night, O night divine!*

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming

A reference to the wise men who followed the Star of Bethlehem.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. ^{Matthew 2:9, 10}

*With glowing hearts by his cradle we stand
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming
Here come the Wise Men from Orient land*

We do not know if the wise men came from the East, all we know is that they originated far east of Jerusalem. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.

Matthew 2:1

*The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger
In all our trials born to be our friend*

But only if we do what he commands and have heard all that he has said from the Father. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

John 15:14, 15

He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger

Since Jesus is Lord, Jesus knows what we need. That is why he instructs us, Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Matthew 6:31, 32

*Behold your King; before him lowly bend
Behold your King; before him lowly bend*

*Truly he taught us to love one another;
His law is love and his gospel is peace*

It is true that Jesus's law is love, as his two greatest commandments, the two commandments that all the other commandments hang on, are about love. Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. ^{Matthew 22:37-40} But the gospel Jesus preached is not

peace, despite what the angels said in Luke 2:14. Jesus said, Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. ^{Matthew 10:34}

Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother

The slave here is sin. Note that in the following verse, the Greek for “servant” is *doulos*, or ‘slave.’ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. ^{John 8:34}

And in his name all oppression shall cease

Eventually, this will be true. But currently, it is sadly not. James writes, Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. ^{James 5:10}

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we

Let all within us praise his holy name

Christ is the Lord; O praise his name forever!

His power and glory evermore proclaim

his power and glory evermore proclaim

Once in Royal David's City

About the Carol

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895) originally wrote “Once in Royal David’s City” as a poem for her 1848 hymnbook *Hymns for Little Children*.

Lyrics

*Once in Royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed.
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for his bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ that little child.
He came down to earth from Heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all.
And his shelter was a stable,
And his cradle was a stall.
With the poor and mean and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour Holy.
And our eyes at last shall see him
Through his own redeeming love,
For that child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in Heaven above;
And he leads his children on
To the place where he is gone.
Not in that poor, lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see him; but in Heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high,*

*When, like stars, his children crowned
All in white, shall wait around.*

Analysis of Carol

Once in Royal David's city

Luke records for us why Bethlehem is called David's city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David.)^{Luke 2:4}

Stood a lowly cattle shed.

Where a mother laid her baby

In a manger for his bed.

Mary was that mother mild,

The exact reason God chose Mary to bore Jesus is unknown. All we know is what Gabriel said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.^{Luke 1:28}

Jesus Christ that little child.

He came down to earth from Heaven,

Jesus was certainly not from Earth, thus we conclude he came from Heaven. That is why he said to some Jews, **Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.**^{John 8:23}

Who is God and Lord of all.

And his shelter was a stable,

And his cradle was a stall.

With the poor and mean and lowly,

Lived on earth our Saviour Holy.

And our eyes at last shall see him

Through his own redeeming love,

And Jesus even defines his love, and what that means for us, *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.* ^{John 15:10} But we do not need to keep books and books of his commandments. Jesus says, *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.* ^{Mark 12:30, 31}

And we know that Jesus speaks the truth with this saying, *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* ^{Matthew 11:30}

*For that child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in Heaven above;
And he leads his children on
To the place where he is gone.*

That “place” is the Father’s house. Jesus is there preparing a place for us. *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* ^{John 14:2.}

*Not in that poor, lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see him; but in Heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high,*

This line comes from what Jesus said to his accusers, shortly before he was crucified. *Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* ^{Matthew 26:64}

*When, like stars, his children crowned
All in white, shall wait around.*

And this will take place, at the latest, during the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when the church celebrates with Jesus their victory on Earth. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Revelation 19:6-8

Silent Night

About the Carol

“Silent Night” is a very popular carol written by Joseph Mohr (1792-1848) in 1816, with the music composed by his friend Franz Xaver Gruber (1787-1863) two years later. The carol is such an inextricable part of Christian culture that it was declared an intangible cultural heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2011.

Lyrics

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace
Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing 'Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born
Christ the Savior is born
Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

Analysis of Carol

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight

Many people in the Bible have been afraid in the sight of angels, and the shepherds were no different. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not.

Luke 2:8-10

Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing 'Alleluia!'

Perhaps not literally true of Jesus' birth, the heavenly host and us will say this at Jesus's victory. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Revelation 19:6

Christ the Savior is born
Christ the Savior is born

Silent night, holy night!

*Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face*

A reference to Jesus's description in Revelation. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire.
Revelation 1:14

*With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth*

The First Noel

The First Noel

About the Carol

“The First Noel” is a traditional English carol, so old that it uses the word “Noel” as a synonym for “Christmas.” It is believed to be of Cornish origin, and was first published in a book titled *Carols Ancient and Modern*, edited by William Sandys in 1823. The message of the song is the joyous pronouncement that the King of Israel has been born. When we sing the song or wish someone a joyous noel, we are following the example of the angels, announcing the good news that Jesus Christ was born, not just for Israel, but for all mankind, so we could receive forgiveness of sins through him.

Lyrics

*The first Noel the angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay:
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.*

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel

Born is the King of Israel.

*They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far:
And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night.*

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel

Born is the King of Israel.

*And by the light of that same star
Three wise men came from the country far;
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went.*

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel

Born is the King of Israel.

*This star drew nigh to the northwest;
O'er Bethlehem it took it's rest,
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay.*

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.
Then entered in those wise men three,
Fell reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in his presence
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.
Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth of naught,
And with his blood mankind has bought.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.

Analysis of Carol

The first Noel the angels did say

A little explaining will be helpful. “Noel” is not a name found in the Bible. Instead, it is believed to have come from the French *joyeux noel*, or “Merry Christmas.” There are some who also believe that “noel” may be derived from the French *nouvelles*, or “news.” So here, the author is saying that the angels talked about the first Christmas, or about who got the first news of Jesus’s birth.

Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay:

In fields where they lay keeping their sheep

On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

We do not know if Jesus was born in winter. If he was, it was not recorded in the Bible.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel

Born is the King of Israel.

Jesus’s apostles and disciples, all throughout his ministry on Earth, were wondering when Jesus would take the kingship. That is why after Jesus’s resurrection they asked him, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? ^{Acts 1:6}

They looked up and saw a star

The shepherds did not see the star, that was the wise men.

Shining in the east beyond them far:

And to the earth it gave great light

And so it continued both day and night.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel

Born is the King of Israel.

*And by the light of that same star
Three wise men came from the country far;*

We do not know how many wise men came to see Jesus, for the Bible only says, Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.^{Matthew 2:1}

However, three gifts were recorded as given, so perhaps that is where the idea of the three wise men came from. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.^{Matthew 2:11}

*To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went.*

*Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.*

This star drew nigh to the northwest;
Bethlehem is northwest of Jerusalem.

*O'er Bethlehem it took it's rest,
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay.*

And this is how we know that this star was not an astrological star, or at least it was not when it stood over baby Jesus. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east,

went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child
Matthew 2:9
was.

*Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.*

*Then entered in those wise men three,
Fell reverently upon their knee,*
Fell upon their knee, fell down, nearly the same thing in the context
of worship. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young
child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him. Matthew 2:11

*And offered there in his presence
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.*

And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts;
Matthew 2:11
gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

*Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.*

*Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth of naught,
And with his blood mankind has bought.*

*Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.*

We Three Kings

About the Carol

“We Three Kings,” also known as “We Three Kings of Orient Are” and “The Quest of the Magi” is a carol that was written by John Henry Hopkins Jr. (1820-1891) in 1857. He wrote the carol for a Christmas pageant in New York City.

Lyrics

*We three kings of orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain
Moor and mountain
Following yonder star
O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light
Born a King on Bethlehem's plain
Gold I bring to crown him again
King for ever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign
O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light
Frankincense to offer have I
Incense owns a Deity nigh
Prayer and praising, all men raising
Worship him, God most high
O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright*

*Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light
Myrrh is mine
Its bitter perfume breathes
A life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying
Sealed in the stone cold tomb
O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light
Glorious now behold him arise
King and God and Sacrifice!
Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia
Heaven to earth replies
O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light*

Analysis of Carol

We three kings of orient are

We do not know if the wise men were kings, but if they were, it would seem odd for them to be giving homage to another king.

King Herod worried at this news. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ^{Matthew 2:3}

Bearing gifts we traverse afar

Field and fountain

Moor and mountain

And they must have traveled across these, since they went to Jerusalem first, and then to Bethlehem.

Following yonder star

O star of wonder, star of night

Star with royal beauty bright

Westward leading, still proceeding

The wise men said to King Herod, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. ^{Matthew 2:2}

The wise men are not saying that they saw the star hanging in the eastern sky, but they, when they were in the east, saw the star in the western sky. This is how the star can lead these wise men westward, even though they are from the east.

Guide us to thy perfect light

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain

As recorded by the prophet Micah, But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah,
though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he
come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have
been from of old, from everlasting. Micah 5:2

*Gold I bring to crown him again
King for ever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign*

*O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light*

*Frankincense to offer have I
Incense owns a Deity nigh*

Mary, sister of Martha, agree with this. Then took Mary a pound of
ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped
his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the
ointment. John 12:3

*Prayer and praising, all men raising
Worship him, God most high*

*O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light*

Myrrh is mine

*Its bitter perfume breathes
A life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying*

A reference to Jesus's torture and crucifixion.

Sealed in the stone cold tomb

The tomb that Jesus was laid in: And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

Matthew 27:59, 60

*O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light*

*Glorious now behold him arise
King and God and Sacrifice!
Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia
Heaven to earth replies*

*O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light*

Wexford Carol

About the Carol

“Wexford Carol” is a traditional Irish Christmas carol about the wise men from County Wexford. It was originally known in the Irish as “*Carúl Loch Garman*.” The carol is known as one of the oldest extant Christmas carols. The English version of the song seems to have been translated around the 16th century. It is unknown when the original version was written.

Lyrics

*Good people all, this Christmas time,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done
In sending his beloved son
With Mary holy we should pray,
To God with love this Christmas Day
In Bethlehem upon that morn,
There was a blessed Messiah born.
The night before that happy tide,
The noble Virgin and her guide
Were long time seeking up and down
To find a lodging in the town.
But mark how all things came to pass
From every door repelled, alas,
As was foretold, their refuge all
Was but a humble ox's stall.
Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep
To whom God's angels did appear
Which put the shepherds in great fear
Prepare and go, the angels said
To Bethlehem, be not afraid*

*For there you'll find, this happy morn
A princely babe, sweet Jesus, born.
With thankful heart and joyful mind
The shepherds went the babe to find
And as God's angel had foretold
They did our Saviour Christ behold
Within a manger he was laid
And by his side the virgin maid
Attending on the Lord of Life
Who came on earth to end all strife.
There were three wise men from afar
Directed by a glorious star
And on they wandered night and day
Until they came where Jesus lay
And when they came unto that place
Where our beloved Messiah lay
They humbly cast them at his feet
With gifts of gold and incense sweet.*

Analysis of Carol

*Good people all, this Christmas time,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done
In sending his beloved son*

*With Mary holy we should pray,
To God with love this Christmas Day
In Bethlehem upon that morn,
There was a blessed Messiah born.*

*The night before that happy tide,
The noble Virgin and her guide
Were long time seeking up and down
To find a lodging in the town.*

True enough, Bethlehem was full because of the taxation. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. ^{Luke 2:7}

*But mark how all things came to pass
From every door repelled, alas,
As was foretold, their refuge all
Was but a humble ox's stall.*

*Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep
To whom God's angels did appear
Which put the shepherds in great fear*

Prepare and go, the angels said

*To Bethlehem, be not afraid
For there you'll find, this happy morn
A princely babe, sweet Jesus, born.*

*With thankful heart and joyful mind
The shepherds went the babe to find
And as God's angel had foretold
They did our Saviour Christ behold*

*Within a manger he was laid
And by his side the virgin maid
Attending on the Lord of Life*

Jesus said, *He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.* Mark

^{12:27} Jesus also said that those who die believing in him come back to life. *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* John 11:25

Who came on earth to end all strife.

There were three wise men from afar
We do not know how many wise men there were, that there were three is merely a legend or tradition. However, the wise men gave three gifts, so it makes some sense that each wise man gave one gift each. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Matthew 2:11

*Directed by a glorious star
And on they wandered night and day*

The Bible does not say how long the wise men traveled, however Bethlehem was at least a day away from Jerusalem, which they visited before Bethlehem. And with no talk about how far they traveled from their original country before arriving at Jerusalem, this line can be taken as true.

Until they came where Jesus lay

And when they came unto that place

Where our beloved Messiah lay

They humbly cast them at his feet

With gifts of gold and incense sweet.

What Child is This?

About the Carol

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898) wrote “What Child is This?” in 1865 while severely sick. It was during his recovering that Dix went under a spiritual renewal that lead him to write many hymns, including this one.

Lyrics

*What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping,
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary!
Why lies he in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
The Cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word Made Flesh,
The babe, the son of Mary!
So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
Come, peasant, king, to own him!
The King of Kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone him!
Raise, raise the song on high!
The virgin sings her lullaby.*

*Joy! joy! for Christ is born,
The babe, the son of Mary!*

Analysis of Carol

*What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping,
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary!*

*Why lies he in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?*

Jesus lies in such a lowly estate because Bethlehem was overflowing with guests, there was not room for them all. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. ^{Luke 2:7}

*Good Christian, fear: for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.*

Jesus came not for the righteous, such as the Pharisees, but for the sinners. This is a message he said often. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. ^{Matthew 9:13}

And When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, *They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* ^{Mark 2:17 cf. Luke 5:32}

Nails, spear shall pierce him through,

A reference to the nailing of Jesus to the cross, which also follows a prophecy from David. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. ^{Psalm 22:16}

*The Cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word Made Flesh,*

A reference to the opening of the fourth gospel, And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. ^{John 1:14}

The babe, the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;

A reference to the three gifts the wise men brought. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. ^{Matthew 2:11}

*Come, peasant, king, to own him!
The King of Kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone him!
Raise, raise the song on high!
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy! joy! for Christ is born,
The babe, the son of Mary!*

When a Child is Born

About the Carol

This carol is a very recent carol. The tune was composed in 1974 with the English lyrics coming around a few years later by Fred Jacobson (1914-1988).

Lyrics

*A ray of hope flickers in the sky
A tiny star lights up way up high.
All across the land dawns a brand new morn.
This comes to pass, when a child is born.
A silent wish sails the seven seas
The winds of change whispers in the trees
And the walls of doubt tumble tossed and torn
This comes to pass, when a child is born.
A rosy hew settles all around
You start to feel you're on solid ground
For a spell or two no one seems forlorn
This comes to pass, when a child is born
It's all a dream, an illusion now
It must come true, sometimes soon somehow
All across the land, dawns a brand new morn
This comes to pass, when a child is born*

Analysis of Carol

This song is devoid of many biblical allusions for us to reference. It is, however, a beautiful emotional song putting on display some hopes that people feel when Jesus was born.

*A ray of hope flickers in the sky
A tiny star lights up way up high.*

A reference to what we now call the Star of Bethlehem, which the wise men followed. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

Matthew 2:9

*All across the land dawns a brand new morn.
This comes to pass, when a child is born.*

*A silent wish sails the seven seas
The winds of change whispers in the trees
And the walls of doubt tumble tossed and torn
This comes to pass, when a child is born.*

*A rosy hew settles all around
You start to feel you're on solid ground
For a spell or two no one seems forlorn
This comes to pass, when a child is born*

*It's all a dream, an illusion now
It must come true, sometimes soon somehow
All across the land, dawns a brand new morn
This comes to pass, when a child is born*

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

About the Carol

The exact date of composition is unknown, but “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” first appeared in the 1700 supplement to *New Version of the Psalms of David* (originally written in 1696.)

Lyrics

*While shepherds watched
Their flocks by night
All seated on the ground
The angel of the Lord came down
And glory shone around
And glory shone around
“Fear not,” he said,
For mighty dread
Had seized their troubled minds
“Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind,
To you and all mankind.”
“To you in David’s
Town this day
Is born of David’s line
The Savior who is Christ the Lord
And this shall be the sign
And this shall be the sign.”
“The heavenly Babe
You there shall find
To human view displayed
And meanly wrapped
In swathing bands*

*And in a manger laid
And in a manger laid.”
Thus spake the seraph,
And forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song
Addressed their joyful song
“All glory be to
God on high
And to the earth be peace;
Goodwill henceforth
From heaven to men
Begin and never cease
Begin and never cease!”*

Analysis of Carol

This song is just a simple retelling of Luke 2:8-20, with little exaggeration. There is not much analysis to do. This is possibly the most literal carol.

*While shepherds watched
Their flocks by night
All seated on the ground
The angel of the Lord came down
And glory shone around
And glory shone around*

*"Fear not," he said,
For mighty dread
Had seized their troubled minds
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind,
To you and all mankind."*

*"To you in David's
Town this day
Is born of David's line
The Savior who is Christ the Lord
And this shall be the sign
And this shall be the sign."*

*"The heavenly Babe
You there shall find
To human view displayed
And meanly wrapped*

*In swathing bands
And in a manger laid
And in a manger laid."*

Thus spake the seraph,
We do not know if the angel was a seraph or not. However, since Luke did not make mention of seraphims' signifying wings, it is likely that the angel was just an angel.

*And forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song
Addressed their joyful song*

*"All glory be to
God on high
And to the earth be peace;
Goodwill henceforth
From heaven to men
Begin and never cease
Begin and never cease!"*