

“Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, ‘ENTER YE INTO THE JOY OF YOUR LORD.’

I also heard... a loud voice, saying, ‘BLESSING AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND POWER, BE UNTO HIM THAT SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB, FOR EVER AND EVER.’ ” [Rev. 5:13]

*- John Bunyan
The Pilgrim’s Progress (1678)*



*...and Heaven
& Nature
ing!*



*Musical
Reflections
on the
Birth of
Jesus Christ*



Acknowledgments

The organizers and associated churches of the second annual Joy of Christ Celebration would like to thank the following contributors for their assistance in the production of this CD and booklet:

Above all, our thanks to God for His many blessings and for making this event a reality. We praise and thank You, Lord, for the awesome gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

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CD and booklet content compiled by Paul Browning and Tracy Upole. Booklet cover & interior design by Brenda Caldwell. CD design by Brenda Caldwell and Paul Browning

Kim Bracken

When Kim Bracken married and moved from her hometown of Utterson, in the Muskoka region north of Toronto, Canada, the proprietors of the general store where Kim had worked since the age of fourteen gave her a wood etching inscribed, "May the girl leave Muskoka, But never Muskoka leave the girl."

It never will.

Studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto (financed by her earnings at the general store) followed as Kim started down a long road that has lead through two countries and ten years.

Kim's musical moment of epiphany came at age 17 at the funeral of a friend killed by a train. As Kim performed "Morning Has Broken," she felt something move inside her. Afterwards many in the congregation approached her, confessing similar feelings.

"That was it," says Kim. "From that moment on I knew I had to sing."

Kim writes:

"What a wonderful season, the season of hope. My wish is that all those who listen to your Christmas Celebration will be filled with this hope."



Jeff Johnson

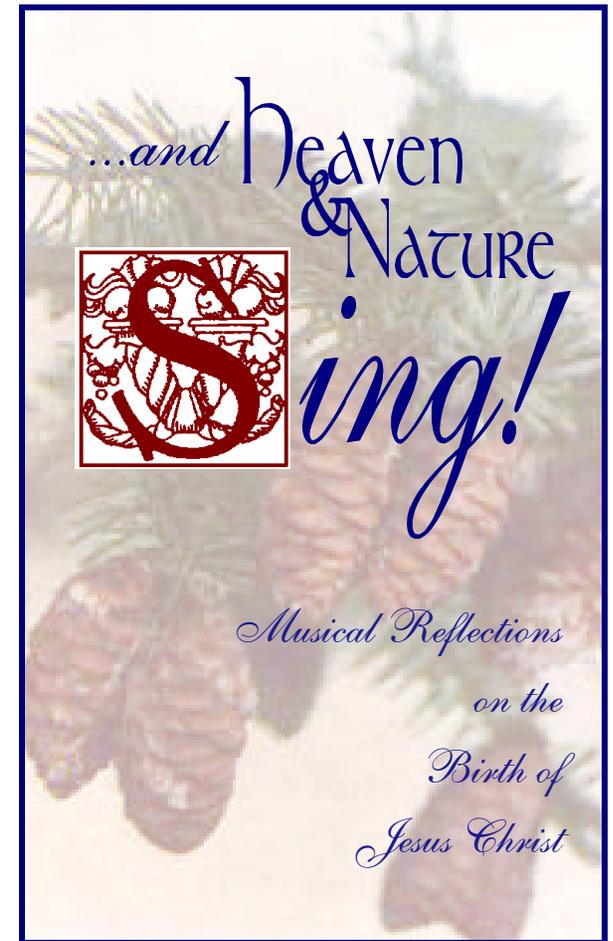


Jeff is a guitarist, arranger, and producer living in the Los Angeles area. Currently he is performing selected live and recording dates while producing a guitar based album of modern love songs.

Jeff writes:

"I am very pleased and proud to be part of this special CD of Christmas music. I hope the music on this CD will add to the joys of Christmas for all who hear it."

To learn more about Jeff and his music, please visit <http://home.earthlink.net/~jeffjohnson> , or write to him at jeffjohnson@earthlink.net .



Michael Tamburello

Michael Tamburello lives in Littleton, Colorado. His daughter, Nina, now 14 and looking toward beginning high school, was shaken during the painful aftermath that followed that tragic day at Columbine High School. In a teary-eyed moment on the day those anguished families received notification of the passing of their sons, daughters, and a loving father, Nina chose to give away a musical heirloom, a lullaby written for her by Michael, with a name change: "Lullaby for Columbine." Her offering spawned contributions from the musical talent of Columbine's neighboring high schools and from artists, songwriters and musicians from the Denver area who wanted to lend their heartfelt support through the healing force of music. The resulting Lullaby for Columbine CD project is being used for the ongoing assistance of the victims of the Columbine High School tragedy and their families. Please visit the project's web site at www.columbinecd.com

Michael writes:

"Christmas greetings to everyone in Garrett County. I am honored to be a part of your music ministry to honor the birthday of the Christ child. May He dwell in your hearts and shine brilliantly to others this holiday season and throughout the year."

Cynthia Jordan



Cynthia's calling to make music her life was evident from her early childhood. She had a red toy piano at age 3. She begged for piano lessons, and on her 11th birthday her grandmother, "Tita," bought her an upright piano. Cynthia went on to study with Dr. Albanese and the piano became her best friend.

She found herself in the music business when she wrote the hit song Jose Cuervo recorded by Shelly West. It went on to be the 1983 #1 country song of the year in both Billboard Magazine and R&R.

Cynthia's unique piano arrangements are accompanied by flutes, violin, cello, and Celtic harp. Her greatest desire is to play the piano to bring a peaceful environment to her listeners, as she has done for her family since she was a young girl.

Cynthia writes:

"Greetings! How very exciting that the kind people of Garrett County are allowing me to musically and spiritually participate in their Christmas Celebration

2000. It is my Christmas wish that during this joyous holiday, all people of the earth will in some way experience the Christ Light in their own lives. It is in the spirit of love and peace that I share my music with all of you. Hold the Light!"

To learn more about Cynthia and her music, please visit www.cynthiamusic.com, or write to her at Cynthia Jordan, P.O. Box 1501, Hendersonville, TN 37077.

7. Don't wait! Invite Jesus to be Lord of your life now!

- For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5:2)
- Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him. (Revelation 3:20)

Next Steps

Get a Bible. Read about Jesus and what He taught so you will know what He wants you to do in your life.

- Thy word have I hid [laid up] in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psalms 119:11)
- Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

Join a body of believers.

Share the good news with others!

- And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:11)
- As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7)



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4. We Must Accept Jesus as Savior and Lord to Be Saved from Death

- 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)
- Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)
- Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." (John 14:6)

5. Believing in Jesus is not Enough, We Must Accept Him and Make Him Lord of Our Lives

- And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (Hebrews 5:9)
- Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:19-26)

6. Repent of Your Sins

- And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:15)
- Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)
- Repent ye therefore, and be converted [turn again], that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; (Acts 3:19)

Jesus tells us to do whatever it takes to turn away from wrong activities, behaviors, habits, or thoughts.

- And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Matthew 5:30)

It probably will never be necessary to cut off a body part to stop sinning, but drastic action may be needed. You need to consciously get rid of things that cause you to sin.

BASIC STEPS TO FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST

What does it mean to surrender your life to Jesus Christ? Followers of Christ of all denominations agree on the following general statements:

1. All People Are Sinners

- For all have sinned and come [fall] short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

Face it, we all have done things that displease God and put distance between us and Him. For some, they are outwardly obvious, such as crime, drugs, and violence. For others, they may be things that nobody else knows about, such as greed, pride, pornography, or impure thoughts.

- If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

Many people realize that they are sinful, but they are unable to stop sinning. No one really wants to be unjustly angry, a drunk, a liar, or think evil thoughts. In Romans 7:20, the apostle Paul describes sin this way: "Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it."

2. The Price of Our Sin is Death

- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Yes, we deserve death because we have separated ourselves from God with our sin, but God has a way of cleansing us from our sins: JESUS.

3. The Death of Jesus on the Cross is a Ransom for Us

If God forgave us of our sins without a price being paid for them, He would no longer be a holy and just God. The gift of Christ can be compared to a court judge that presides over his friend's case for breaking the law. Because the judge is just and knows that his friend broke the law, then he must order his friend to pay a fine for his wrongdoing. Because his friend is unable to pay the fine because it is so large, the judge, who is his friend, reaches into his own wallet and pays it himself.

This is why Jesus, who was without sin, needed to die for our sins: because we are unable to pay it ourselves. Whatever your sins have been, you can never do enough good deeds to make up for your sins.

- But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (Isaiah 64:6)
- By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Ever since the birth of Jesus, people have wanted to know who He is, what He taught, and what He requires of us. This booklet will attempt to give insight into the answers to these questions, based on scripture, and challenge you to decide for yourself and take action in your life.

The scriptures give us accounts of the birth and life of Jesus, as well as the prophecies concerning Him. At Christmas time, we recall these events and their significance, giving thanks to our heavenly Father who sent Him.

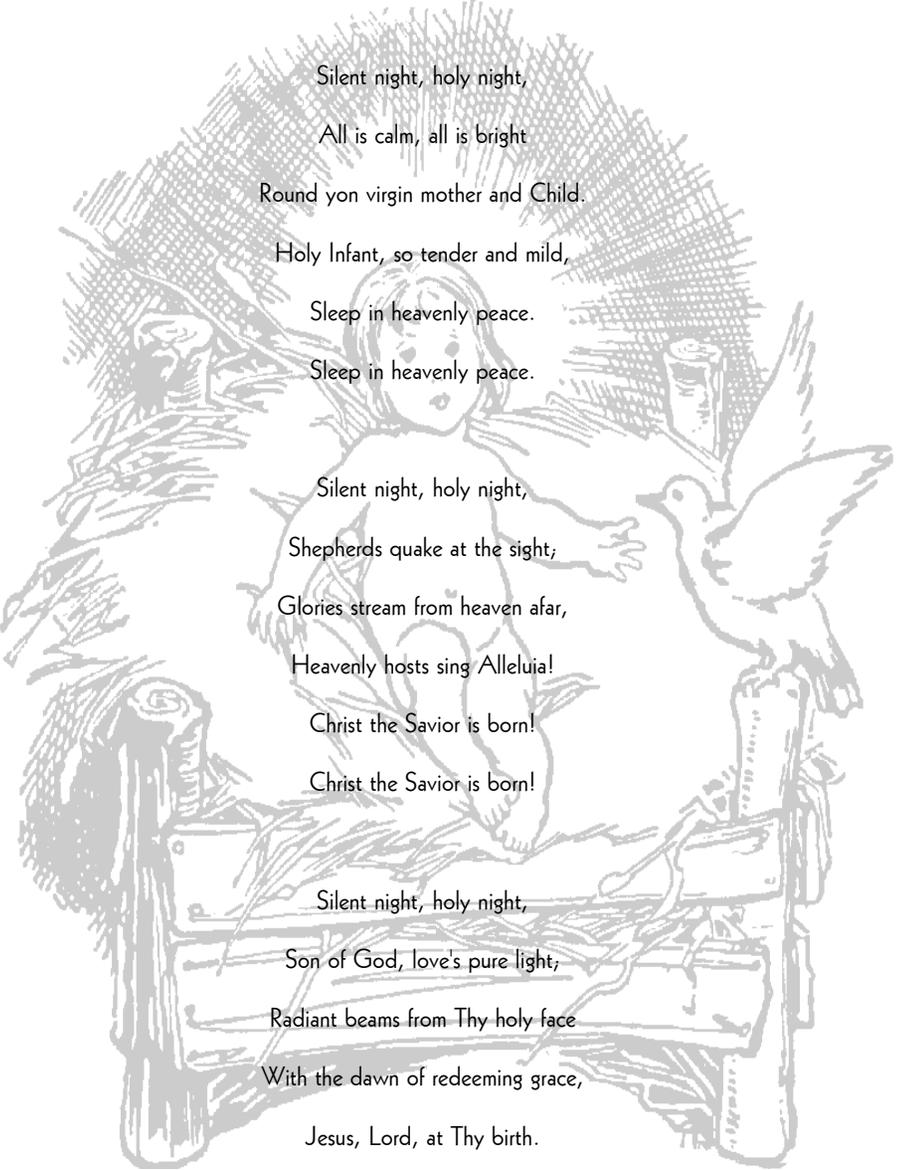
The creators of this booklet and organizers of the Joy of Christ Celebration hope that you will take the time to read and consider for yourself accepting the free gift of the Messiah that God has sent for you.



Track #1: Silent Night

Lyrics: Joseph Mohr, 1816

Music: Franz Xaver Gruber, 1818



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.

The Origins of the Christmas Celebration

Most scholars agree that December 25th is probably not the calendar day of Jesus' birth, the day the "First Noel" was sung by the angels. Originally, "Christmas" was a floating holiday that occurred on various days of the year. According to The Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 5, 1768 edition, around A. D. 336, the church of Rome wanted to do away with the pagan December 25th festival, chosen as the birthday of the unconquered Sun (natales solis invicti) which at the winter solstice begins again to show an increase of light. To do this, the church established the commemoration of the birthday of Christ, the 'Sun' of righteousness, on this date. In fact, many of the traditional customs and decorations connected with Christmas have been derived or adapted from the original pagan celebration. An example is the "tree idol" found in the Bible in the Old Testament book of Jeremiah, which has been converted into the modern-day "Christmas tree."

- Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel. Thus saith the LORD: Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. (Jeremiah 10: 1-6)

Many historians say the "tree idol," which was used by the worshippers of Baal, originated in ancient Egypt in the days of King Osiris (possibly Nimrod of Genesis 10, according to some historians) and Queen Isis (King Osiris was so evil that he married his own mother!), and their son Horus, about 3,000 B.C. After the death of King Osiris, his wife, Isis, propagated the doctrine of the survival of Osiris as a spirit being. She claimed a full-grown evergreen tree sprang up overnight from a dead tree stump, which symbolized the springing forth unto new life of the dead Osiris. On each anniversary of his birth, she claimed, Osiris would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts upon it. December 25th was the birthday of King Osiris, reborn as the son Horus. This is the origin of the Christmas tree. In Egyptian mythology, Osiris became known as the "divine son of heaven." How ironic that this symbol would eventually be adopted by some Christians to remember the true "divine Son of heaven."

Because of the history of many Christmas customs and traditions, some people have chosen to celebrate Christmas on a different day or develop their own new customs. Some choose not to celebrate at all, and others prefer to use the adapted customs to glorify God and thank Him for the gift of Jesus.

When confronted with these kinds of issues, the apostle Paul wrote that whatever we do, we must do it unto the Lord:

- One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:5-6)

Most people would agree that Christmas has become an increasingly commercialized and worldly time. Whatever you choose to do this Christmas, do it unto the Lord!

Track #12: The First Noël

English Carol, 1833

The first Noël, the angel 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.

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

For all to see, there was 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.
(Chorus)

And by the light of that same star
The wise men came from country far,
To seek for a king was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went.
(Chorus)

This star drew nigh unto the Northwest,
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest.
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay.
(Chorus)

Then entered in those wise men three,
Full reverently upon their knee;
And offered there in His presence,
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.
(Chorus)

Then let us all with one accord,
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord.
Who hath made heav'n and earth of naught,
And with His blood mankind hath bought.
(Chorus)

The Prince of Peace

Silent Night is one of the most “peaceful” Christmas hymns. However, some of the events described in the verses are anything but peaceful: the birth of a child and the shepherds quaking at the sight of angels. The real peace comes from the identity of the child: the Prince of Peace.

- For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace . Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- 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. 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 2:13-15)

Jesus brings us peace because He has been given all power in heaven and earth. All that follow Him have nothing to fear; not because He will stop all of mankind's fighting, for much of mankind will reject Him, but because He has conquered death and the world, reaching beyond all of our circumstances.

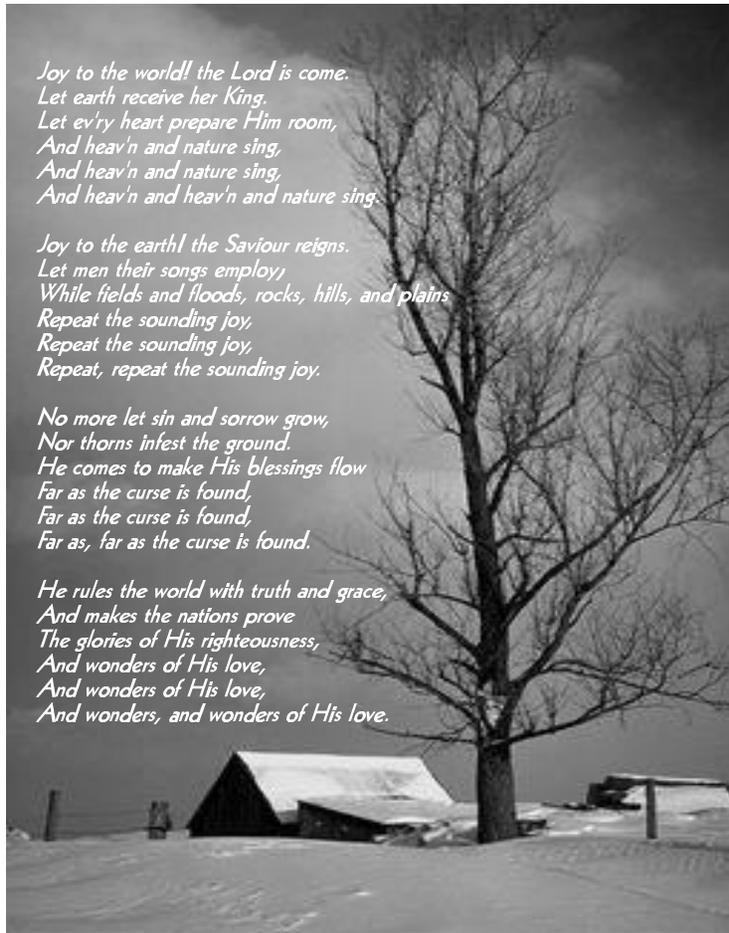
- These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace . In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)
- And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked. (Isaiah 48:22)
- But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (Matthew 10:33)
- But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished? Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. (Luke 12:50)
- Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

Do you experience the peace of Christ in all areas of your life? If not, what areas of your life do you need to give to Him? Do others see this peace and comfort within you?

Track #2: Joy to the World

Lyrics: Isaac Watts, 1719

Music: George Frederick Händel, 1742



*Joy to the world! the Lord is come,
Let earth receive her King,
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.*

*Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns,
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

*No more let sin and sorrow grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, and wonders of His love.*

The Unparalleled Joy of Christ

Numerous things in this world can bring us joy: spending time with family, doing things that we enjoy, seeing a baby smile for the first time, experiencing the love of another person, and many other memories and experiences. But, sometimes the troubles of life pull us away from those joyful experiences and prevent us from holding onto that joy. So, all of these joyful things of life are only temporary.

However, there is another way that we can experience true joy that is everlasting. Two thousand years ago, heavenly angels came to common people, the shepherds, in the fields to bring them "good news of great joy!" - A Savior was born to take away the sin of the world!

The Ministry of Jesus: Touching the Untouchable

The announcement of Jesus' birth did not come first to the affluent and educated of the land, but rather to the shepherds. They were absolutely at the bottom economically, educationally, and even religiously. While most Jews took ritual baths before every great festival to purify themselves to go before God, the shepherds were the unwashed. They could not leave the flocks. They did not have the liberty or the resources to leave the rocky hillsides outside Bethlehem to prepare themselves properly for religious duties. They were the illiterate, the hirelings, the bottom of the social ladder of the times. To them the Good News was first declared.

What might that mean for us? Most of us are not anywhere near the bottom in terms of education or social class or opportunity. Still, some reading this have the feeling that their lives are about as far down as they can get.

During His ministry, Jesus spent His time ministering to the ill, the corrupt, the poor, and the sinners. It is to the bottom-most, to the lowest of the low, that Jesus came. Christ does not come to our strength, glory, affluence, or education. He comes redemptively to our pain, sorrow, sinfulness, guilt, emptiness, and hopelessness. It is to those places and to people in those conditions - those of us who are shepherds in our souls - that the angels come with the good news that Christ is born for us.

- While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and `sinners?'" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: `I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:10-13)
- While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and `sinners?'" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:15-17 NIV)
- Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, `Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' (Luke 15:1-6)
- When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases." (Matthew 8:16-17 NIV)

Are you a "sinner," or have you deceived yourself into believing that you are "leading a good enough life?" As the scriptures have shown in the past few pages, we are all sinners. Jesus has come for us all, but to deny our sinfulness is to reject our need for Him. Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

- See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

Track #11: Do You Hear What I Hear?



Said the night wind to the little lamb,
do you see what I see
Way up in the sky, little lamb,
do you see what I see
A star, a star, dancing in the night
With a tail as big as a kite
With a tail as big as a kite

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,
do you hear what I hear
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy,
do you hear what I hear
A song, a song, high above the trees
With a voice as big as the sea
With a voice as big as the sea

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,
do you know what I know
In your palace warm, mighty king,
do you know what I know
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold
Let us bring Him silver and gold
Let us bring Him silver and gold
Said the king to the people everywhere,
listen to what I say
Pray for peace, people everywhere!
listen to what I say
The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night
He will bring us goodness and light
He will bring us goodness and light

- 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)

Jesus came to earth to live as we live and to pay the ultimate price for sin – death. He died so that we can live. Dying may not sound like a very “joyful” topic. However, Jesus did not remain in the grave. He conquered death and continues to live today!

- And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. (Matthew 28:8-10)

Once we come to know Jesus as our Savior, He comes into our hearts and fills us with an inexpressible and glorious joy. When we simply know Him, we have reason to be content and happy, but it is not until we love Him and follow Him that we can fully experience the joy that only He can bring into our lives.

- 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. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:10-11)

Do you love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, and mind?

- Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (Matthew 22:37)

Once God helped me to see that I need to place loving Him first in my life, He has filled my life with contentment, hope, and indescribable joy.

The joy we experience in Christ is a joy that is complete and never ends because Christ's love for us never ends.

- Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:24)

No one can take away our joy in Christ.

- And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. (John 16:22)

Even when life gets tough and we face trials, we still have reason for joy. James 1:2 says to “consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” Perseverance leads to maturity, and that requires a greater dependence on the Lord. The more we depend on Him, the more we know Him; the more we know Him, the more we trust Him; and the more we trust Him, the greater our faith and our joy.

In a world that causes us trouble and pain at times, let us set our eyes on the One who came to Bethlehem to show us the “wonders of His love.” Let Jesus into your heart and prepare to experience the incredible joy that only He can bring.

- Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

What indescribable joy!

- Angie Teagarden

Track #3: Go Tell It on the Mountain

Written by John Wesley Work, Jr., 1907

While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a holy light

Chorus:

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;
(Chorus)

Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn
(Chorus)

When I was a seeker
I sought both night and day
I sought the Lord to help me
And He showed me the way.
(Chorus)

He made me a watchman
Upon the city wall
And If I am a Christian
I am the least of all.
(Chorus)



Man's Sinfulness:

- Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you. (Psalm 143:2 NIV)
- All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. (Isaiah 64:6 NIV)
- There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins. (Ecclesiastes 7:20 NIV)
- **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves**, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar**, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10)

Like His father, Jesus is also Holy:

- And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. (Luke 4:33-34)

Why is this important? Just as God required perfect animals to be sacrificed to him in the Old Testament, Jesus came as a pure and holy sacrifice for the sins of you and me. This is why Jesus is called "The Lamb of God."

- And if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering unto the LORD be of the flock; male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. If he offer a lamb for his offering, then shall he offer it before the LORD. (Leviticus 3:6-7)
- 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)
- The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'" First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (Hebrews 10:1-14 NIV)

Have you accepted the sacrifice of Jesus, so that you may be made holy? Accepting Him involves something more than going to a weekly service; it involves turning away from your sins and doing His will. Are you actively seeking His will, or just going through a weekly routine? What does He want you to do right now?

Track #10: O Holy Night

(Cantique de Noël) Traditional

Written By John S. Dwight

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
Till He appeared, and the soul felt its worth!
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices!
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!
Oh, hear the angel voices

Chorus:

O night divine - O night when Christ was born!
O night divine - O night, O night divine!

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, then praise His name forever.
(Chorus)



Understanding God's Holiness

One of the most unique attributes of God is His holiness. God is unlike any man. He is set apart from all the rest. God wants his people to strive to be holy, although we are all sinners and fall short of God's glory. God's Holiness and His Desire for us

- For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (Leviticus 11:45)
- And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy. (Leviticus 19:1)
- Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:13-16)

Spreading the Good News

While the shepherds were still filled with wonder and amazement at the angels' proclamation of the birth of the Messiah, they went to see for themselves, then quickly spread the news.

- 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. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. (Luke 2:15-18)

Jesus directed us to go and spread the good news, just as the shepherds did.

- And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (Mark 16:15-18)
- And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:7-8)

Similarly, the apostle Paul taught new followers of Jesus to do the same.

- And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:14-16)

Sometimes, spreading the good news of Jesus is not popular. Later, while in prison, as a result of his "gospel spreading," Paul writes:

- For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; (2 Timothy 1:7-8)
- And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. (Acts 4:18-20)

Are you a follower of Jesus? Have you been a witness of what you have "seen and heard?" Have you been "telling it on the mountain?"

Track #4: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Traditional
Written by Charles Wesley, 1739
Music by Felix Mendelssohn, 1840



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

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

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

Come, Desire of nations, come,
Fix in us Thy humble home;
Oh, to all Thyself impart,
Formed in each believing heart!
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!
Hark! the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the newborn King!'

- For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)
- Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: (Colossians 1:12-14)

By subjecting our lives to Jesus on Earth, we are preparing ourselves to serve and praise the Father in the kingdom of heaven.

- Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1)
- For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (Ephesians 5:8 NIV)
- And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)
- For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. (Isaiah 66:22-23)

Our preparation may not always be enjoyable to us, but it will shape us into the people that God wants us to be.

- I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. (John 15:1-2 NIV)
- But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. (1 Peter 5:10)
- And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:5-11 NIV)

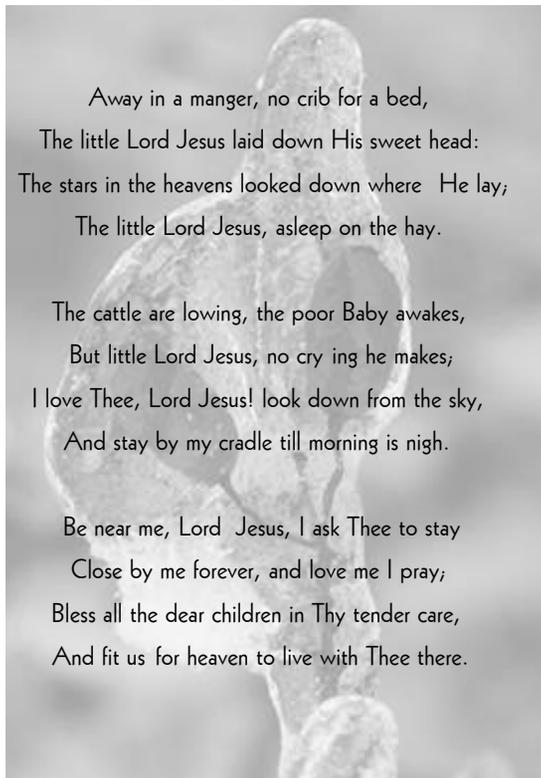
Are you preparing yourself for an eternity of praising God and serving Him? What are some ways that God might be "pruning" you to produce more good fruit? Have you been resisting Him, or accepting His guidance?

Track #9: Away in a Manger

Traditional

Author Unknown (Verse 3: John Thomas McFarland)

Music: William J. Kirkpatrick



Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head:
The stars in the heavens looked down where He lay;
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the poor Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me I pray;
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.

Fit Us for Heaven

John the Baptist came, preaching a baptism of repentance from sin to pave the way for Jesus. Similarly, Jesus has come, paving the way for us as repentant sinners to ultimately be with God, our Father. What kind of preparations do we need? Accepting Christ as our Lord allows for removal of our sins, which, in turn, enables us to enter God's Kingdom and be with Him forever. It is this sinful nature that separates us from God now.

The Incarnate Deity?

Definition of deity or god: a) A being conceived as the perfect (sinless) omnipotent (all-powerful) omniscient (present everywhere) originator and ruler of the universe. b) The force, effect, or a manifestation or aspect of this being.

One of the problems that the Pharisees had with Jesus was the claims that He made about himself. He claimed to have authority and characteristics that they believed belonged to only God (Jehovah, or Yahweh). Some of these claims included:

Forgiveness of Sins

- When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? (Mark 2:5-7)

Judgement and Resurrection

- For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. (John 5:21-23)

Being Eternal

- For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; (John 5:26)
- Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:58)
- 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)
- And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. (Revelation 1:17-18)

Giving Eternal Life

- And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:28)

Creating the Heavens, Angels, and Earth

- For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (Colossians 1:16-20)

Being All-Powerful

- And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18)

Being Sinless

- And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. (1 John 3:5)

Special Knowledge of the Present and Future

- But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. (John 6:64)
- "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." (John 1:48)
- And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31)

Being Present Everywhere

- For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)
- Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:20)

By making such claims, they felt that he was blaspheming against God.

- Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. (John 10:31-33)
- (After healing on the Sabbath Day) But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:17-18)

These and other scriptures, giving Jesus the attributes of God, have produced modern titles like "The incarnate Deity" and "God made man" for Jesus.

- 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)
- Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwell eth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2:8-9)
- Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. (John 14:8-11)
- (Talking about Jesus) Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature? (Colossians 1:15)

Comfort, Joy, and True Love

Tidings of Comfort and Joy: this was the proclamation of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds on the night of our Savior's birth!

- 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. (Luke 2:10-11)

The birth of the Christ child certainly was a great reason to rejoice. It meant the fulfillment of God's promise to His people: that He would send His promised "seed" to reconcile us to Himself.

- And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. (Genesis 22:15-18)
- The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16 NIV)
- And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

How comforting it is to know that, although we are all sinful and fall short of His glory, God loved us enough to send His only begotten Son as a ransom for us! Therefore, we should love each other as He has loved us, because God's love is "true love."

- Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (1 John 4:7-11)
- This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:12-13)
- Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10)
- If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. (1 Corinthians 13:3-5 NIV)

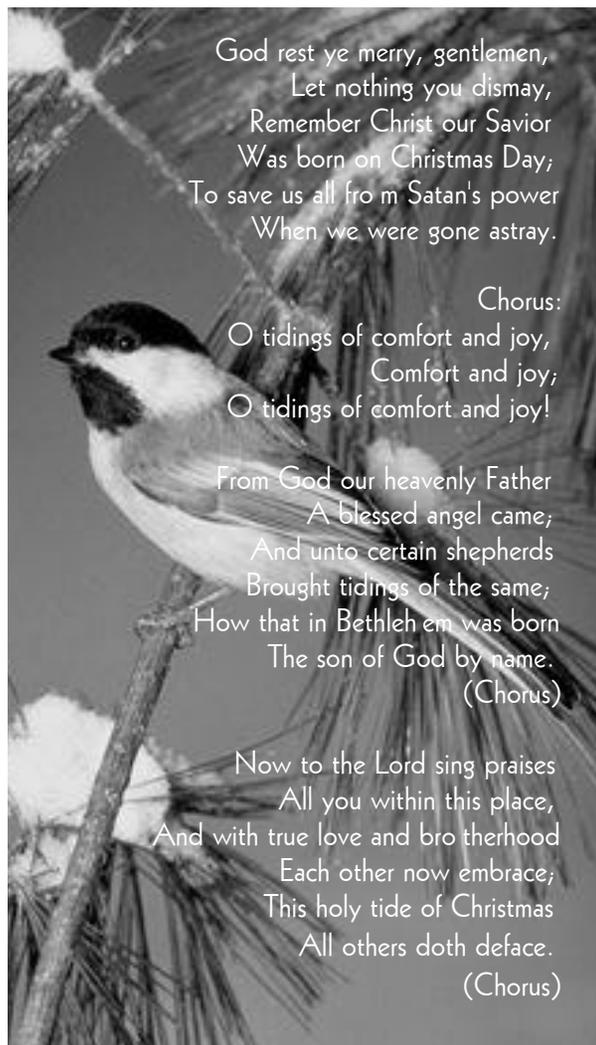
Jesus commanded us to show this kind of love to be followers of Him.

- As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 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. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (John 15:9-15)

Have you experienced true love? What can you do to show greater love to your family, co-workers, and neighbors? What can you do to show greater love for God?

Track #8: God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

Traditional
Author Unknown



- Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (Philippians 2:5-7)
- And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)
- God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: (Hebrews 1:1-3)

Because Jesus and the Father share these characteristics and always work in complete agreement and harmony, some choose to group God the Father (Jehovah, or Yahweh), Jesus, and God's Holy Spirit together, calling them jointly "the Godhead," "God in three persons," or "the Trinity." Some prefer not to do this, calling it either a "man-made term" or an "oversimplification."

Early church founders, and even some people today mistake terms like the "Trinity" as a statement that Jesus and God the Father are exactly the same, which is not what is meant, and is not scriptural.

- Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19)
- My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. (John 10:29)
- (Jesus, speaking about His return in the future) But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. (Mark 13:32)
- Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. (2 John 1:9)

Similarly, many persons that do not like to use terms like "Trinity" are mistakenly assumed to not believe in the authority and characteristics of Christ listed above. It is unfortunate that some teachings that actually do go against the scriptures have caused such a division of misunderstanding between true believers.

Whatever terminology we use to refer to Jesus and His Father, let us remember their power, holiness, role in creation, role in our salvation, and that both will receive honor and glory by all angels and mankind in God's heavenly kingdom.

- Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. (Revelation 5:12-13)

Track #5: O Come, All Ye Faithful

Lyrics: Edward Caswall, 1849

Music: "Adeste Fideles", from John Francis Wade's Cantus Diversi, 1751



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!

Refrain:

O come let us adore Him!

O come let us adore Him!

O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Yea, Lord we greet thee, born this happy morning

Jesus, to thee be all glory given

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

(Refrain)

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above

Glory to God in the highest:

(Refrain)

Jesus, the Obedient Servant of God

Throughout the Bible, children are favored by God and by their parents. They are often "chosen" by God to do some task or other. Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. God favored Abraham with the birth of his son, Isaac, when he was one hundred years old. Joseph was favored by his father, and, some time after the age of 17, found special favor of God while in Egypt.

Like all of these "children," the Christ child has found favor in the sight of both God and man, even more so because of His righteous birth. His birth began a legacy that would lead to the salvation of the world. Jesus was born of humble means. The world came to see Him: Christ, the baby king. All walks of life came, from the lowly shepherds to mighty kings of nations. Gifts were given Him in awe. Even angels announced His birth: this child, this babe born in a manger, this King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Savior to the world. His life began in the pains of birth from His mother's womb to end in the promise of His Father for all who will listen and obey.

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Christ's example of humility and obedience to the Father for those that seek the Father's favor:

- And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (Matthew 26:39)
- For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)
- Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. (John 10:17-18)
- Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (Hebrews 5:8-9)
- Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

What child is this? It is the most important question that you must answer in your lifetime.

Will you give your life to Him in complete obedience and humility?

Track #7: What Child Is This?

Traditional
Lyrics: William Chatterton Dix
Music: "Greensleeves" English trad.

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

This, this is Christ, the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing
Haste, haste to bring Him laud
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.

This, this is Christ, the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing
Haste, haste to bring Him laud
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Joy and Triumph: The Rewards of Faith

As we have seen earlier, Jesus is the creator and ruler of the angels. (See the first two chapters of Hebrews and 1 Peter 3:21-22 for more on the relationship between Jesus and angels). However, God did not send Him to overthrow kings and governments. He has sent Him to save the faithful. What is faith?

- Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

What should we have faith in? What are its rewards?

- 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)
- Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)
- For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4-5)

Yes, faith in Jesus results in us accepting His death as a substitution for the price to be paid for our sins. This is mankind's only source of righteousness & hope for eternal life with God.

- But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)
- Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. (Galatians 3:6-8)

Even faith itself is a gift that is given to us by Jesus.

- Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Faith in Jesus is also faith in God, who sent Him.

- Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. (John 12:44)

Remain faithful to the end, and your reward will be great!

- Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Have you been faithful, or have you put your trust in the things of this world? Have you studied the scriptures enough that you can defend your faith under scrutiny or times of trial?

Track #6: Angels We Have Heard on High

Traditional French Carol

Translated from the French by James Chadwick, 1813-1882

Music: Gloria, French traditional carol: "Les Anges Dans Nos Campagnes"



Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains:
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their joyous strains.

Chorus:

Gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heav'nly song?
(Chorus)

Come to Bethlehem, and see
Him whose birth the angels sing,
Come adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
(Chorus)

PRAISE FOR THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS

It is exciting to sing the angels' exact words of praise to God as they announced the arrival of the Messiah, the one through whom God created the universe: "Gloria in excelsis Dio!" (Glory to God in the highest)

- 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)

Both Jesus and His disciples sang praises to God too.

- And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. (Matthew 26:30)
- And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. (Acts 16:25)

The line "And the mountains in reply..." is not just a figurative statement. While entering Jerusalem, Jesus told us that even the rocks would cry out if the people stopped praising God the Father and Jesus, who came in His name.

- And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. (Luke 19:37-40)

We also see that the angels and all people on earth will praise God the Father and Jesus, His son, in God's heavenly kingdom.

- Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" (Revelation 5:13)

We should do the same: not just by verbal praise, but complete submission to our Father's will.

- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:19-20)
- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:16-17)
- Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever. (Psalms 30:11-12)

What are some ways that you can give your life more fully to God? Do you honor Him in every part of your life? How can you praise Him all day long?