

23-59-01-O Come, O Come, Emanuel
 Incarnation, Christmas, Advent, Carol, Christ
 Isa 59:20
 Human longing is turned to joy at the Advent of Emmanuel.

INTRODUCTION: (Luke 1:67-79 for Scripture Reading)

–Among the Church’s musical treasury are *Christmas carols: songs celebrating the Advent season*. Most have rich messages about Christ’s 1st Coming. The oldest one that’s still popular is “*O Come, O Come, Emanuel,*” a Latin chant from the 8th Century. Then, it was sung to a monophonic tune called plainsong—simple notes without harmony. Today’s familiar melody was finalized during the 1800s.
 –This carol lends itself to an Advent sermon, not just by capturing the human longing for redemption, but by describing the longed-for work of the Redeemer mentioned in Isa 59:20, “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD.
 –This song became known as “*The Seven O’s,*” because each stanza begins with “O,” focusing on different names for Christ. We will look briefly at six of these:

I. The Original Concluding Stanza is the Best Introduction:

“O come, O come, Emmanuel \ And ransom captive Israel
 That mourns in lonely exile here \ Until the Son of God appear.”

- A. The biblical expression of longing for salvation from the hand of God is typified by Isa 59:20, “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD.
1. This *longing* is an anticipation (Believers know that God alone is the source of salvation: our religious effort fails to do the job.
 2. This *longing* is an attitude (a mourning over sins [moral failures]).
- B. **Human longing is turned to joy at the Advent of Emmanuel.**
 Each stanza ends with a change in melody, now that “*God is with us*” as Redeemer: “*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel \ Shall come to thee, O Israel.*”

II. The Original 1st Stanza Is Often Skipped Over at Great Loss:

O Come, Thou Wisdom from on high \ And order all things, far and nigh;
 To us the path of knowledge show, \ And cause us in her ways to go.

- A. *Why do we long for “Wisdom from on high”?* All human *wisdom* from the sages of the ages or the *knowledge* modern science offers us,

have failed to lead us into *personal* and *global* peace.

- B. The coming of *Emmanuel* [“*God with us*”] fulfills our longing— 1 Cor 1:30. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us **wisdom** from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

III. This Next Stanza Expresses Our Longing for Deliverance:

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free \ Thine own from Satan's tyranny
 From depths of Hell Thy people save \ And give them victory o'er the grave.

- A. A descendant was to spring up from the devastated house of David, son of Jesse— Isa 11:1. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. (The full impact of this “Rod of Jesse” would only be realized when “Satan’s tyranny” met defeat at Christ’s Cross, when His Gospel began saving souls “from depths of Hell,” and when Jesus’ Resurrection brought “victory o’er the grave.”
- B. “Rejoice! Rejoice” people of God! *Emmanuel* [“*God with us*”] will not leave us to the enemy of our souls, nor to the ravages of hellish living, nor to the despair of death. He will “free” us from them all!

IV. Emmanuel’s Coming is the Key to our Highest Aspirations:

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.

- A. We often pray for open doors, but our requests are often guided by temporal goals. The *God of eternity* wants to unlock our hearts to eternal values, and close them to worthless ones— Isa 22:22. I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.
- B. [Highway to Heaven: TV show about *two angels helping people* out of trouble or pointing them in the *right direction*.] Angels do help us, but they don’t control the doorways of life or the door to Heaven. It’s Emmanuel, the shepherding God, who opened “wide our heavenly home,” shutting down “the path to misery” from which humanity longs to be free.

V. Humans Long for Light, When Life’s Pathway Is Dark:

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer \ Our spirits by Thine advent here.
 Disperse the gloomy clouds of night \ And death's dark shadows put to flight.

- A. Listen to this OT prophesy— Isa 9:1-2 (NRSV) But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in

a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined.

- B. Now, listen to a voice from the NT– Luke 2:25-32 (ESV), Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."
- C. Human hearts despair in the gloom of darkness, but light dispels depression. ("God is light," and through Emmanuel "*God with us*" will "Disperse the gloomy clouds of night \ And death's dark shadows put to flight.")

VI. The Last Stanza Addresses Humanity's Greatest Global Need:

O come, Desire of nations, bind \ In one the hearts of all mankind;

Bid Thou our sad divisions cease, \ And be Thyself our King of Peace.

- A. God's intention from the beginning was the unity of humanity, but sin has brought us a long history of "sad divisions."
- B. Jesus Christ, *Emmanuel* ["*God with us*"], came not just as the Savior from sin but as "King of Peace" to "bind in one the hearts of all mankind."
1. We fail to find inner peace without sin's release by the *crucified Savior*. (Religious effort can never bring what only "*God with us*" in relationship can bring to the human heart.)
 2. History's royal reigns, tyrannical rulers or promising politics never brought the freedom of war and want we seek. (We won't see world peace without the coming rule of the "Prince of Peace.")

CONCLUSION:

–"*Rejoice! Rejoice!*" says this ancient Christmas carol, "*Emmanuel, shall come to thee...*," and the NT tells us that it's not just to "Israel," but to **all** those lost in the darkness of sin and to **all** those devastated by *political, economic, and cultural* turmoil. *Emmanuel* is coming back to bring the peace we all long for. **But He has already come** to bring us the freedom from sin and gloom that we can experience now, today, as we celebrate again this season that remembers His first Advent.