

GOODNEWS LETTER

Number 248

December 24, 2008

SONGS OF CHRIST'S BIRTH

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given... and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," Isaiah 9:6.

Scripture tells us to remember the death of Jesus through participation of the Supper - "*As oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*" (I Cor. 11:24). But, no verses can be found dictating that we remember of His birth.

Yet, each year, the world goes all out in celebration of the birth of the new born King, Jesus. If we can get past the commercialization - the color, fairy-tale myths and the cartoon-like approach and remember that God has entered into man's flesh, we can certainly appreciate this time of year; even though we do not know the birthday of Jesus, exactly.

For man, the birth of Jesus is the **DAY OF DAYS**. This day was prophesied in the above verse of Isaiah 9:6, Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 7:14 - "*Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*"

Words and music by man have properly given the seriousness and spirituality of that day, capturing its glory in many songs we sing this time of the year.

Lyricists penned poetic words that matched Scripture; while composers added just the right notes to produce the most beautiful songs about Jesus, His birth and those surrounding this glorious event.

First, the deliverance: In Luke 2:7, we read, "*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.*"

The angel tells shepherds "*For today in the city of David there has been born a Savior, who is Christ the lord. And this will be the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger,*" Luke 2:11, 12.

"**Away In The Manger**" puts the Scriptural event in song. (One source notes that Luther was not the writer, attributing it to J. T. McFarland, 1851-1913.)

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

Luke 2:13 & 14 says an heavenly host appears suddenly, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men..."

This passage moved Charles Wesley (1701-1790) to pen the wonderfully familiar:
"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 Hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King."*

Finally, one hymn we love to sing this time of the year is "**Joy To The World**," written by **Isaac Watts in 1719**. While, there is certainly nothing wrong with singing it this time of the year, its words speak, not of the birth of the Savior, but of His **Second Coming** and the day of the millennium reign, after the resurrection.

Watts' third stanza clearly points to that coming day. "*No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground.*"

Looking forward to that day, Watts writes: "*He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations prove The glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love,*" verse 4.

Nevertheless, Mr. Watts urges all to: "*let every heart, prepare Him room, And heaven and nature sing.*" Then, he places these beautiful words at the King's return: "*He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found.*" (Of course, these words fit both advents; both, its Spiritual meaning at His birth and His physical return to earth.)

I love to sing in spirit and truth, having the words of the song match a Biblical text. Sure, other tunes may be catchy. But, do we listen with our ears or our hearts? The Preacher is absolutely correct, "*It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools,*" Ecclesiastes 7:5.

Certainly, any song about Jesus - in any sense, whether **His birth, His sermons** or, **His death** cannot be fixed to only one portion of the year. For a learned Christian, their **Holiday season** is every day of the year. **Jesus lives!**

Simply, there isn't just one season when we come to the LORD of LORDS. We should sing about Him as we live for Him; that is, **year 'round**, seeking to honor only Jesus **24/7 - 365**. This is Paul's approach in Colossians 3:14. Let's join Paul with a heart full of glory and honor to the LORD; and, let's sing to the LORD, only.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly
in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one
another in Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual
Songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the LORD."