

# The Hopes and Fears of All the Years

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[ 0 : 00 ] We've sung and heard much of the Christmas story already tonight. We sung about Emmanuel, which means God with us. We've been reminded of the longing that was Israel's for many years in the centuries before Christ came.

We sung about the child in Mary's lap. We sung about who he is. This, this is Christ. The king. The one that God promised long ago. This baby. The son of Mary. We've been reminded of the lowliness of Christ's entrance into our world.

Why lies he in such mean estate? Where ox and donkey are feeding. Not in a palace crib. Or even in the bed of an inn. But away in a manger. A feeding trough. And we've been reminded of that glorious announcement of the angels to the shepherds.

[ 1 : 14 ] Glory to God in the highest heaven. What is this all about? Taken on their own, these things may not hit all the way home to our hearts.

Perhaps we need to step back and consider the larger story that God has been writing in our world. God is the great and glorious creator.

The one who made the universe and everything in it long ago. He spoke it into existence by his power and his love.

He formed the first human pair in his own image. And gave them life. And everything God made was very good.

He gave us a beautiful garden paradise to live in. A whole world of delights. A whole world of yeses.

[ 2 : 16 ] And just one no. And sadly, we rebelled against God. In one act of cosmic treachery, humanity defied God.

And brought guilt and corruption on the human race. What would God do with this man and this woman? And all their descendants to follow?

What kind of God is this who made this world that we live in? The Bible tells the very words that God spoke to Moses long ago on the mountain about himself.

The Lord passed in front of Moses. Proclaiming his name. The Lord. The Lord. The compassionate and gracious God.

Slow to anger. Abounding in love and faithfulness. Maintaining love to thousands. And forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

[ 3 : 29 ] Yet, he does not leave the guilty unpunished. What is the Bible? It's the story of this God.

Whose name is the Lord or Yahweh in Hebrew. It's the story of his compassion. The Bible is the story of his grace.

His giving kindness. It's the story of how slow he is to anger. It's the story of just how far his love abounds.

It's the story of how astoundingly trustworthy God is to keep all of his promises. And it's the story of how God will forgive wickedness, sin, and rebellion.

And yet, at the same time, not leave the guilty unpunished. God started by choosing one family on earth.

[ 4 : 43 ] And he made promises to them. Grand promises. A promise to bless the whole world through one man. Abraham. And his offspring.

And as the centuries go by, God continues to relate to this man's descendants. Making them into a great nation. And then, to a special king of this nation.

A man named David. God makes more great promises. A promise to establish David's kingdom forever. And that through David's offspring.

And the story goes on. And as generation after generation lives out their days on the earth, God adds even more promises. Wonderful promises.

Expanding on all that he has already foretold. The nation of Israel spirals downward. Into the same defiant rebellion.

[ 5 : 47 ] As Adam. Yet God keeps making these gracious and compassionate promises. And he keeps calling to himself a people.

How will God fulfill all this? How will God establish this great kingdom? The last kingdom. The never-ending kingdom that he promised. How will God make this broken and war-torn world that we live in today?

Into a place of everlasting peace. Everlasting joy. Everlasting justice and righteousness as he promised.

How will God deal with the problem of our guilt? How will he live forever with us? When we have sinned so greatly against him.

And deserve to be punished in a way that would shut us out of his favor forever. However.

However. However. This is the amazing thing. God would do all of this.

[ 6 : 50 ] God will fulfill all of this through one man. The baby. Born in Bethlehem. God had planned something truly amazing.

A plan to bring all this to fulfillment. Not just a rescue mission. Not just a salvation. But all of it. The promises of this great kingdom too.

The promises of eternity. Living forever in this kingdom. With God. God will do all of it through this one man. The baby born.

In Bethlehem. The baby who was laid. In a manger. The baby. Who the angels announced. To the shepherds.

Who is this Jesus that we celebrate. At Christmas. Where do we even start? He's the descendant of Abraham. Through whom the whole world.

[ 7 : 49 ] Will be blessed. He's the son of David. Through whom God will establish. His coming kingdom. He's the great high priest. Who will make atonement. For sins.

He's the sacrificial lamb. Provided by God. For the sins. Of the world. He's the ultimate prophet.

And mediator. Between God and man. Far greater than Moses. Or Elijah.

He's the one through whom. God's word and power flows. Like never seen before. Is he man? Or is he God?

God's answer is mysteriously. Both. Jesus is truly God. Yahweh himself.

The creator. Come to live with us. And among us. Come to take on human flesh. God's word. He is truly man. And at the same time. He is truly man.

[ 8 : 48 ] Subject to human weakness. Suffering. Hunger. Pain. And even death. This baby would grow up.

As we sang. To have nails. And spear. Pierce him through. But not for his own sin. He had none. But for ours. So that by his death. God could freely offer. That forgiveness. To sinners.

Like you and me. To the wicked. The sinner. The rebel. And at the same time. Ensure. That our guilt. Receives. What justice requires.

Jesus went on. To suffer and die. On that cross. Long ago. It was a gift of love. From God. Freely offered. To the whole world.

[ 9 : 48 ] The birth of Jesus. Marks. The tangible. Visible. Beginning. Of all that God has promised. Now. Beginning.

To come true. And all of it is there. Wrapped in swaddling cloths. Lying in the manger. The great. Glorious. Creator of all. Comes down to the lowest. Of lows. The barn. Out back. Because there was no room. In the inn.

This really was. A holy night. That we celebrate. This really was. A thrill. Of hope. The weary world. Rejoicing. For yonder. Breaks a new. And glorious morn. Christ. Our savior. Was born.

[ 10 : 47 ] And this. Just the beginning. He lived. He died. To atone. For our sins. He rose up. Three days later.

He ascended. To heaven. To heaven's throne. And there are still. Many more promises. That God has yet. To fulfill. What we celebrate.

At Christmas. Is just the beginning. Christ. The king. Has been born. And his kingdom. Is still coming. It awaits the end.

When Jesus. Will return. As dark. As our world. Still is today. As broken. And war torn. As we see in the news.

As sick. And as sad. Christ. Is coming back. To reign. And he. Shall. Reign. Forever. He will establish.

[ 11 : 45 ] That good kingdom. Of God. He will bring. Everlasting peace. Righteousness. Joy. Love. Justice.

The end of pain. Suffering. Struggle. Death. Temptation.

It awaits. The return. Of this. God man. Jesus. The baby. Who was born. In Bethlehem. Who will enjoy.

This good kingdom. Who will be. The citizens. In it. Forever. God's answer. In the Bible. Is it's those. Who turn away.

From their sins. And who put. Their trust. In God. Who put their hope. In him. And seek his forgiveness. Those who believe. In the Savior.

[ 12 : 41 ] In Jesus. That same one. Born in Bethlehem. Have you done this? Nothing in life.

Matters more. Than this. For God. So loved the world. That he gave. His one and only son. That whoever.

Believes in him. Shall not perish. But have eternal life. This. Is the good news. Of Christmas. We see it.

In the whole. Christmas story. And I hope. That you get. Some time. To really read through it. With your families. In your celebrations. But this is it. This is what we see.

Through the whole story. We see that God. Is compassionate. He is gracious. His love. Is abounding. His faithfulness.

[ 13 : 38 ] Is abounding. And yes. He really does forgive. Sinners. Like you and me. A little town of Bethlehem.

The hopes. And fears. Of all the years. All of them. Right back to the beginning. Are met in thee. Tonight. Let's pray. Father in heaven.

We say thank you. For this amazing gift. The best gift. Thank you. For sending your son Jesus.

Thank you. For the life. That you give us in him.

The hope. And the certainty. For the future. For all eternity. Thank you. For the forgiveness. Thank you. For revealing. Yourself.

[ 14 : 33 ] In such a humble way. And for showing us. Just how much you care. For each one of us. And I pray that every heart. In this room. Would be touched. By that reality.

And know. Your love. Tonight. Make that. Even more real. To our hearts. As Christmas draws near. And you. And you. Lead us.

And guide us. In this Christmas season. We pray. In Jesus name. Amen.