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ARTICLE

The Rich Theology Of Christmas Carols





BY JOHN STONESTREET/BREAKPOINT.ORG DECEMBER 24, 2025

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Scripture portrays the Incarnation as an act of war against Satan, sin, and death. God taking on flesh is at the center of the cosmic conflict between good and evil; a battle for a world never fully lost by God but recaptured in the life, death, and Resurrection of Christ Jesus.

Of course, that part of the Christmas story tends to be missing from the 24-hour holiday music stations, most Christmas plays and pageants, and many Christmas Eve sermons. However, there is a source that continues to confront people with the whole Gospel, offering clear teaching about the redemptive realities of this holy season. Christmas carols are incredible teachers of theology and worldview.

For example, the "Wexford 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*

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Was born on Christmas Day
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray
Oh tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
Oh tidings of comfort and joy

With haunting beauty, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" situates the coming of Christ within the context of God's Old Testament promises:

*O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law,
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.*

*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.*



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Few hymns offer as rich a Christology as "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," a brainchild of the great hymn-writer Charles Wesley and also, in part, the great revivalist George Whitefield.

*Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see,
hail the incarnate deity
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel*

*Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace,
hail the sun of Righteousness Light
life to all he brings, ris'n healing in his wings
Christ the highest heaven adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord
Come desire of nations come, fix in us thy humble home
Come desire of nations come, fix in us thy humble home*

"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" describes clearly how the cosmic battle will eventually turn out:

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Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: 'God is not dead, nor doth he sleep,

The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, With peace on earth, good will to men,'

Till, ringing singing, on its way,

The world revolved from night to day,

A voice, a chime, a chant sublime, Of peace on earth, good will to men!

These songs, and others, remind us of essential Christmas truths: that this world belongs to God, that our plight of sin is not wholly lost, that the world's captivity to Satan's schemes is not the end of the story, and that God working through the ages has promised redemption.

Through Patriarchs, prophets, and kings, He has fulfilled the promises given so long ago, in the wonders of the Incarnation, the fear and hope of Mary and Joseph, and the realization and glory of angelic hosts proclaiming their king, and ours.

Each year these hymns remind us that God has not left us in a broken state but came and lived among us so that He might die for us. In these songs are the whole gospel of God. And, as comforting and instructive as they are to us, at what other time of the year do otherwise disinterested friends, neighbors, and family members find themselves humming along with theology?

A colleague once observed that Christmas is an opportunity to emulate the witness of Philip to the Ethiopians. The world around us hides under vain pleasures and false narratives, but they know that things are not quite right. What they need to hear is how things can be made right in Christ Jesus. By singing our way through Christmas, we can share with the world what it most needs to know.

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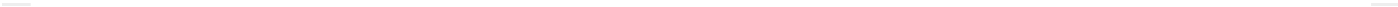
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