

SESSION 1: O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

John 1:11-12, Revelation 21:4, John 14:3

QUESTIONS

1. Describe a time when you have experienced longing in your life.
2. Using Scripture, explore and discuss the different names of Jesus used in this hymn:
 - Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14)
 - Rod of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1)
 - Day-spring (Luke 1: 78, 79)
 - Key of David (Isaiah 22:22)
 - Desire of Nations (Haggai 2:7)
3. If you had the opportunity to add a few verses to this hymn, what are some additional names that you personally would include for Jesus?
4. Describe how this hymn is both past and future-focused. When we sing "O come, o come, Emmanuel," what are we confirming? What are we requesting?
5. How is the music for this hymn different from many Advent and Christmas carols? Why is it appropriate that the music is written in such a way? What feelings does the music prompt in you?
6. What are some things that we can do daily to show the Lord that we long for Him to return? Discuss the difference between passively waiting and actively waiting.
7. The video explains that this hymn was part of the "Great 'O' Antiphons," which were sung statements whose purpose was to concentrate the mind on the coming Christmas. What could you do each day, individually or as a family, to focus your mind in this season of Advent?

[illegible]

8. Spend time reading through each verse together. Discuss the bolded phrases. What do they mean, or what are you proclaiming when you sing this phrase? What biblical references do you infer or recall as you read the verses? Which phrase speaks to your present situation?

O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

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.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Adonai, Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 1: O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

Welcome! In today's session, we'll explore the Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

This ancient hymn takes us back over 1,200 years to monastic life in the 8th or 9th century. It originated from the "Great 'O' Antiphons," short, sung statements, all beginning with "O," that were part of the medieval Roman Catholic Advent liturgy. Seven days before Christmas Eve, monasteries would sing one antiphon daily. Originally seven in total, their purpose was to concentrate the mind on the coming Christmas. Today, most hymnbooks include just five of the original antiphons, all of which greet the Savior with one of the many titles ascribed to Him in Scripture: Emmanuel, or "God with us" (Isaiah 7:14), Rod of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), Day-Spring (Luke 1:78, 79), Key of David (Isaiah 22:22), and Desire of Nations (Haggai 2:7).

Beautifully reflecting the anticipation and expectation that defines Advent, the hymn doubles as a prayer for both the first and second coming of Christ. Over 2,000 years ago, the Israelites were eagerly awaiting the first coming of Christ. His coming as the Messiah was first prophesied as early as the 6th century B.C. when the Jews were captive in Babylon. For centuries thereafter, the people of God looked for their Messiah with great longing. We see this reflected in verse one with the lyrics, *and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here*. Christ did come "unto His own" to establish a spiritual kingdom and free them from their sins, however, the tragedy was that *His own received Him not* (John 1:11-12). Even though many did not accept Christ as the promised Messiah, when we sing this hymn today, we celebrate the biblical and historical fact that God came to earth in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ.

There is also a future aspect to this hymn, however. Christ's first coming gives us a reason to rejoice again and again, yet we know that all is not well with the world. He shed His blood on the cross for the sake of our sins and for our eternal freedom, yet death, disease, and calamity still exist. Satan still has influence, and sin still abounds. When we sing this hymn, not only do we celebrate Christ's birth and His first coming, we also express our deep and heartfelt yearning for Him to return a second and final time, so that we might be in fellowship with Him forever. No more sin, no more sorrow, no more pain (Revelation 21:4). Along with our rejoicing, we plead that He would come again to perfectly fulfill the promise that all darkness will be turned to light. This is powerfully reflected in what is traditionally verse four: *O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by Thine advent here; O drive away the shades of night and pierce the clouds and bring us light*.

As impactful as the hymn's lyrics are, the music is equally impactful, as it powerfully captures the longing expressed in the text. There is a significant difference in feeling between this hymn and the exuberant "Joy to the World," or the vigorous and bounding "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Here, there is much yearning, aching, and hoping. The latter is expressed vividly in the refrain, which reaches down musically into our often weak and tired hearts and pulls us up, in faith, to see the certainty of the end: *Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel*.

We can be sure that Christ will come again, just as He promised He would (John 14:3). May our conviction of His return be strengthened this Advent season, and may our hearts and voices collectively sing, "O come, o come, Emmanuel!"