

SESSION 1: COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS

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

Galatians 4:4-5, Isaiah 9:6, John 18:37,
1 John 4:9

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the thematic diversity of Advent, and how this hymn is a reflection of this diversity.
2. What do you think it is about hymns such as this one, and the other Wesley hymns listed at the beginning of the video, that allow them to stand the test of time? Explore the connections between these hymns to help guide your discussion.
3. The video mentions that the first stanza draws upon Old Testament prophecies and the anticipation of the Messiah. Search Scripture to find and discuss a few of the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfils.
4. What does it mean for Jesus to be your *Strength and Consolation*?
5. Wesley highlights that Jesus was *born a Child and yet a King*. Discuss the significance of this truth, and how it impacts your life today.
6. Note the connection with this hymn and a portion of the Lord's Prayer (see Matthew 6:10). What are we asking for when we make the request, *Your kingdom come*? In what ways do you need the power of the kingdom of God today?
7. What does it mean when Jesus is the King of our hearts? What are the signs that He rules and reigns there?
8. Reflect on the lyrics of this hymn and the prayerful tone they have. With these lyrics as inspiration, write down, or pray aloud, a prayer that expresses your worship of Christ and your longing for His return.

[illegible]

COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free.
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a Child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit,
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

[illegible]

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 1: COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS

Welcome! In today's session, we'll explore the Advent hymn, "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus."

First published in 1744 in a collection of hymns titled *Hymns on the Nativity of Our Lord*, this enduring hymn was written by the prolific eighteenth-century hymn writer, Charles Wesley. Widely regarded as the greatest hymn writer of all ages, Wesley wrote over 6,000 hymns, many of which we still sing today. These include, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing," "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," and "Rejoice, the Lord Is King," just to name a few.

With its opening line beckoning "Come," this hymn is best suited for the season of Advent, powerfully capturing the Advent themes of waiting, preparation, and hopeful anticipation. Just a year before writing the hymn, Wesley had been ordained in the Church of England and was tirelessly preaching the gospel message across Britain alongside his brother John Wesley, a prolific hymn writer in his own right. Having seen firsthand the needs of the poor and the marginalized in British society, Charles was compelled to write a hymn that would help inspire hope and joy within humanity, while also preparing hearts for the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

Though rather short, the two stanzas of "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" are rich in meaning, and wonderfully epitomize the thematic diversity of Advent. In the first stanza, and drawing upon Old Testament prophecies and the anticipation of the Messiah, Wesley put himself in the place of the Israelites who had long cried out for a Savior. The lyrics, *Come, Thou long-expected, born to set Thy people free*, capture their collective hope, and present Jesus—the desire of every nation and joy of every longing heart—as the fulfillment of that hope. Only He can fully release us from our fears and sins, and only in Him can we find true rest. And no longer is He just the Strength and Consolation of Israel; He's the Strength and Consolation of all—the *hope of all the earth*.

Yet Wesley also looked beyond Christ's first coming in Bethlehem to His future return. The hymn is not only a preparation for the nativity of Jesus, it's also a longing for Christ's kingdom. Every time we sing it, we have the privilege of doing so as people who know that Jesus was the promised Messiah—the One *born to deliver us from our sins* (Galatians 4:4-5), and *born a Child and yet a King* (Isaiah 9:6, John 18:37). Out of this awareness, we respond with a humble request for His kingdom: *Now Thy gracious kingdom bring*. We hope for

the time when Christ will return, establishing fully and finally the kingdom of God, and we voice our collective longing for Him to *raise us to His glorious throne*.

But, if we go even deeper yet, we can see that "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" doesn't just express an ancient hope for the Messiah and a contemporary hope for the Messiah's second coming. This hymn rightly assumes that Jesus also comes today; that His kingdom is already here. When we sing this hymn, we confess together that He is *born to reign in us forever* (1 John 4:9), and request that He *rule in all our hearts alone*. Of course, this reign and rule in our hearts is only by His merit, and not our own, a truth that Wesley also makes clear. We have done nothing to deserve this; it is simply grace.

In Advent, we long for the second coming of Christ and for the fullness of the kingdom. Yet, in our yearning we also open our hearts to Him, inviting Him to fill us and use us through the power of the Spirit. As we pray, "Come, Thou long-expected Jesus," we are asking Him to come into our hearts afresh, and to rule over our hearts today so that we might serve and glorify Him in everything we do.

The timeless relevance of the hymn rests in how it voices the universal hopes and cries of every heart, past and present. We all desperately need the very things Christ offers—freedom, strength, hope, peace, and consolation. Through our singing of this timeless hymn, we identify with those ancient Israelites who yearned for messianic deliverance, and are also reminded that only in Christ are our deepest longings met.

So, until He comes again, may our song always be: *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus!*