



O Emmanuel

Traditional Antiphon	O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
<i>O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Savior: Come and save us, O Lord our God.</i>	<i>O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.</i>

Our Advent pilgrimage nears its end. The *O Antiphons* have been our guide these last six days, and perhaps you enter this seventh day a bit restless. Dear saint, on day seven, we enter the sabbath rest. Yes, all the world waits in great anticipation for tomorrow's silent night, holy night. The eighth day of New Creation awaits us. A new child, the New Adam, arrives upon another evening. All our hopes, all our cries out to the Lord God, shall be answered in the cries of a precious infant. It is folly to the world wrapped in darkness, but our pleas to God to send us Immanuel find their answer in God's naturally ordered creation by sending us a baby.

Son of God and Son of Man

This babe is more than Mary's Son; he is the Son of God and the Son of Man. He is fully human, and he is fully divine as the [Council of Nicaea upheld](#) seventeen hundred years ago in the face of Arian denial. Contrary to the world, God presents himself to us as his response to our call for salvation. Contrary to the world, we profess and confess alongside St. Athanasius what God revealed on Christmas morn and recorded in Holy Scripture: the Word is made flesh.

The Antiphon anchors its last message to us, weary pilgrims, by greeting us with one last holy and blessed Name for God the Son, Immanuel. The name is a divine revelation as to who the Christ child is, namely, God with us. Isaiah prophesied long ago for us to anticipate this day, saying,

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

[Isaiah 7:14](#)

The age-old promise of God, delivered by Isaiah, is picked up centuries later, when St. Matthew notes that this prophecy is fulfilled at the birth of Christ. We find ourselves anxiously awaiting this at this hour for the Eve of the promised Immanuel's birth. See Matthew 1:23. Do you feel the anticipation this day? Does it not give you "a thrill of hope," in the words of the carol "O Holy Night"?

A Hope-Filled Song

Yet today's antiphon is not a sweet lullaby about awaiting the birth of a mere babe but is a boisterous and hope-filled song about who this babe is, always has been, and always shall be: "Our king and our lawgiver." The child who we await to be born and laid in the manger is God himself, the King Eternal. The babe whose birth ever nears, whom we shall find as the shepherd once did, asleep on the hay, is mild in temper and the holiest of holies.

He is the Word of the everliving Father who spoke the cosmos into existence. He is the Word who breathed life into the first Adam's breast and shall soon take breath in his own breast as the New Adam. He is the Word who delivered the law to Moses through his divine, pre-incarnate finger on the tablets. He is the Prophet promised by Moses and the One greater than John the Baptist who shall herald his coming. He is the King, whom the nations rage against. See [Psalm 2](#). Yet he is also recorded in today's antiphon as "the hope of the nations and their Savior."

The Tables Have Turned

Despite the rage of the nations against the coming of the Lord's anointed, the Christ, is undoubtedly coming. He appears in his first Advent to call the nations to repentance and bear their hatred, insults, and cross. Therefore, we find that the tables have turned. Now the hostile, pagan, and demon-infested nations of the earth shall soon "become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." ([Revelation 11:15](#)). What once was a hostile world shall now become the domain and dominion of God.

We cry out to God this evening, "Come and save us, O Lord our God," and tomorrow evening the King answers and in shall appear as a child. He hears our cry, just as he heard

the cry of the Israelites in bondage in Egypt. So too, he hears our cries as we are in bondage to sin, death, and the devil, and he delivers us a new and greater Moses, the Prophet and King, Jesus Christ.

To Ransom Captive Israel

Yet more good news—gospel—abounds! Our King comes to “ransom captive Israel,” as we sing in the hymn, [“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,”](#) and he comes to spread Israel’s kingdom, his kingdom, over the entirety of the earth. The coming King is not merely King of the Jews; his Kingdom extends over and unto the ends of the earth. Our mourning in lonely exile—both Jew and Gentile—nears its end, for tomorrow, “the Son of God appear.”

Precisely because Christ’s kingdom extends over all creation, he sends out his Church to

“...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

[Matthew 28:19-20](#)

The King has commanded us to “love one another,” and what greater love is there than to share with weary, captive Israel over all the earth that the Great Shepherd is appearing and calling his sheep home? Do you feel the thrill of hope in the air, dear sinner? It is the King’s loving voice in your ear, calling you unto him. His whisper is a loving reminder that all is not lost, for he has come to save you. He lovingly whispers, “Tomorrow, I will be.”

The genius of the O Antiphons lies not only in their beautiful poetry and Scriptural rootedness, but also in their poetic acrostic. The original Latin of the O Antiphons, when lined up and read from the bottom to the top, forms an acrostic spelling out the Latin phrase “*ero cras*”. What are the O Antiphons telling us as we enter the final antiphon and near the Last Day? *Ero cras*, or *Tomorrow, I will be*.

He is Coming Soon

Perhaps Advent ends as a season; however, it endures upon our hearts, our minds, and our longing souls even as we near [Christmastide](#). The Christ child has been born unto us; now we await the Christ King’s return. He shall reign on earth as in heaven, and he shall right the wrongs and heal the nations that once opposed his rule. Every moment we live and breathe, we live in great anticipation of our Lord Jesus’ second appearance, when

*...he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; *
and with righteousness to judge the world, and the peoples with his truth.*

[Psalm 96:13](#) Coverdale Psalter

Our longing to see our Savior face to face upon the earth continues, for we desire Immanuel, God with us, to return and reign. Take heart, O Church,

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

[Revelation 22:20](#)