

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Christmas reminds us that God does things differently than we expect ... a newborn baby to save the world? Really? Yes, really.

The song, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” gives us a peek into God’s strategy for Christmas:

1. Jesus addresses all our hopes and fears.

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy darkness shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

Micah 5:2-5 (NLT)

² But you, O Bethlehem, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past.

³ The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies until the woman in labor gives birth. Then at last his fellow countrymen will return from exile to their own land.

⁴ And he will stand to lead his flock with the LORD’s strength, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored around the world. ⁵ And he will be the source of peace...

What are you hoping for? Isn’t that the same thing you fear ... that it won’t happen, or happen badly, or won’t meet your expectations?

The people of Israel had been through a very tough time, they were in need of the promised Messiah! And to think, their hopes and fears were met in a newborn baby.

2. Jesus puts us in touch with the supernatural.

For Christ is born of Mary,
And fathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God, the King,
And peace to men on earth.

Matthew 1:18-21 (NLT)

¹⁸ This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹ Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

²⁰ As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

What needs to begin within you, conceived by the Holy Spirit? A new outlook on life? A new career? Rediscovering the joy in your marriage? Good news! Jesus puts us in touch with the supernatural ... the power of God is ours in union with Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus brings a taste of heaven to earth.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous Gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

Matthew 4:17, From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

4. Christmas is a deeply personal event.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in,

Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
Oh, come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Immanuel!

Luke 2:8-12 (NIV)

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

¹¹ Today in the town of David (Bethlehem) a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

The population of Bethlehem was normally about 500 to 600 (although it had swelled due to the census) ... that would mean there might be as many as 10 babies in town (19 births per 1000 per year) ... and probably only 1 newborn, and certainly only 1 newborn "laying in a manger."

Glad tidings: "everybody can experience great joy!" Why?

Glad tidings: "a Savior has been born." What should I do?

Glad tidings: "you can find Him yourself!"

MAIN POINT: God wants me to personally discover the Savior of Christmas.

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, in the rush of this season we pause to be amazed at Your Christmas strategy. You came as a baby. You came outside of normal means ... and God, we want to live beyond 'normal' also! So, Jesus, we meekly receive You; and, we ask You to work supernaturally in our lives. Penetrate us deeply and personally with Your joy-giving life. In Jesus' name, amen."