

Come Unto Christ – A book of Mormon Cantata
Narration and Lyrics

Come Unto Christ

*Come unto Christ ye penitent and meek
Seek this Jesus of whom the prophets speak
Seek this Jesus whose mercies never cease
Come unto Christ and find in him eternal peace.
 Come unto Christ who bore our griefs alone
 Who will carry our burdens as his own
 Seek this Jesus and by his love be blessed
 Come unto Christ and find in him eternal rest.*

"Come unto Christ." This divine invitation to peace and joy has been extended by the Lord throughout the ages. Through prophets commissioned to speak in his name, God promised to the fallen world a Savior who would take upon himself the sins that would bar us from his presence. The prophet Isaiah, speaking to God's people gathered in Israel, bore witness of Christ's atoning sacrifice, saying, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Though the people of Israel were soon scattered throughout the earth, the Lord continued to send prophets among them who testified of the promised Messiah: Ezekiel in Jerusalem; Jeremiah in Egypt; Daniel in Babylon; and, at the same time, a prophet named Nephi testified of Christ among a group of Israelites who had been led by the Lord to the Americas. He said, "...we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ... that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. ...there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ... whereby man can be saved."

Many of Nephi's people believed his words. Their hearts were filled with gratitude for this loving Savior who would redeem them from their lost and fallen state, and they rejoiced as they came to rely on the goodness and merits of "him who is mighty to save."

Break Forth in Joy

*Oh fallen man, where is thy hope?
What hand shall lift thee and bear thee up?
And who shall pay the heavy cost
To ransom thee lest thou be lost?
 Break forth in joy and sing ye all together
 Thy consolation descendeth from above
 Rejoice! the Son of God shall break the bands of death
 Oh praise his name forever, and sing redeeming love.
All we like sheep have gone astray
Have turned each one to his own way
But the Lord shall bear the griefs of men
And offer up his soul for sin.*

The long years passed, and the Lord raised up many prophets among the Nephites. Each of them testified of Christ who should come. They taught that he would be born of a virgin, beautiful and fair above all others. They spoke of great signs and wonders by which the Nephites might know of his birth. They promised that after his ministry at Jerusalem, after he had atoned for their sins and suffered death for their sakes, he would rise again from the grave and come among the people of Nephi.

The faithful watched for the signs foretold, announcing the Savior's birth. They waited for a night when the sun would set, and yet no darkness would follow. They watched for the appearance of a new star, such a one as they had never before beheld.

The time approached, and as far away, a virgin, great with child, traveled with her husband to the city of David; as the heavenly hosts prepared their songs of exultation; the faithful Nephites wept. For there were many who would not believe in the prophecies of Christ, and Satan raged in the hearts of the wicked. A day had been chosen by the unbelievers, by which time the signs of this supposed Christ's coming must be given. If by this day the signs did not appear, those who believed would be put to death.

The threat was not an idle one, for their rulers and judges had become corrupt, and the wicked did not fear the law. The faithful feared, lest by any means they had mistaken the words of the prophets. Though they continued to watch steadfastly for the signs of his birth, they did not know the hour, and feared they would not live to see it.

Oh Come, Thou Blessed Messiah

*I come to thee in weariness, oh wilt thou hear my cry?
I tremble, Lord, in fearfulness, the night is drawing nigh.
No help but thee! no there is none to save 'til thou appear.
Oh come, thou blessed Messiah, come
Deliver me from fear.*

*I turn to thee in helplessness 'mid foes unyielding found
Shall I be lost in hopelessness as darkness gathers 'round?
I plead for mercy. There is none but thou to hear my plea.
Oh come, thou blessed Messiah, come
And set the captive free.*

*I cry to thee in sore distress this eve of bitter grief
And who, oh Son of Righteousness, but thou can bring relief?
My enemies oppress and there is none to stay their wrath
Oh come, thou blessed Messiah, come
And ransom me from death.*

When Nephi, a prophet named after Nephi of old, saw this great wickedness among his people, his heart was grieved. He bowed down and cried mightily to God in behalf of those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith in Christ.

And as he prayed, the Lord spoke to him, saying, "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand... ..on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world..."

Surely the faithful rejoiced at the news of their deliverance, and eagerly watched the skies. And the word of the Lord to Nephi was fulfilled. As the sun sank in the west, no darkness overtook them; no cloak of shadow enshrouded the world. The skies remained as bright as midday throughout all the accustomed hours of night.

Perhaps they wept. Perhaps they fell to their knees in gratitude as the cry went out, re-echoing like ringing bells, "The sign is given! Christ is born!"

Christ is Born

*Christ is born, ye faithful rise! Behold a wonder among the skies
Earth resounds in hymns of praise. His star hath set the night ablaze
Hail the dawn of heaven's morn! Sing we triumphant, Christ is born!
Darkness flees before the sight of glory bursting upon the night,
"Christ is born!" the skies proclaim, his star hath set the night aflame!
Hail the dawn of heaven's morn! Sing we triumphant, Christ is born!
Christ is born: his sign appears; confirms our faith and stills our fears
Christ is born, and doubt departs. His star hath risen in our hearts
Hail the dawn of heaven's morn! Sing we triumphant, Christ is born!*

The faithful rejoiced; the unbelievers were silenced. They knew the prophecies, and by these signs were convinced that Jesus Christ had come into the world. Most were converted to the Lord, and for a time the people enjoyed great peace.

But before many years had passed, they began to forget. They became less and less astonished at the wonders they had seen. They began to be hard-hearted, and willfully blind, imagining that somehow such marvels were wrought by men to deceive them. As the passing years brought them closer to Christ's coming among them, they became proud and wicked, and the faithful were few. Many righteous men who testified boldly of Christ were taken, contrary to law, and put to death secretly.

Nephi was saddened by the hardness of their hearts, and the blindness of their minds. He called on them to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and obtain a remission of their sins. Though he labored unceasingly among them and taught them patiently, still there were but few who turned to the Lord.

Will Ye Turn From Joy ?

*Ye have known his love; ye have felt his spirit,
Ye have eyes to see, then can ye willfully be blind
The Lord hath spoken peace. How have ye ceased to hear it?
Will ye linger still amid the darkness of sin?
He longs to give you life; he longs to bless you.
Can ye then forsake him? Will ye turn away?
Ever he pleads for you, sorrows and grieves for you,
Will ye return to him, or will ye turn from joy?
Ye have heard him speak with the voice of wonders
Will ye not believe, though he hath turned the night to day?
Lest he should speak to you with the voice of thunder,
Flee the way of sin; come unto him, ye who stray.*

Despite the pleadings of Nephi, despite the witness of the faithful, despite the wonders they had seen, the wicked would not repent. The signs of Christ's birth faded in memory, for 33 years had passed since that eventful night. The time drew nigh when the signs of his death, foretold by

prophecy, would be given to the Nephites, and yet they would not repent. His coming among them grew nearer, and still they stoned the prophets and cast them out of their cities.

And so, as Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, as he stood before Pilate, as he bore a cross to Calvary, their wickedness continued unabated.

And as the Son of God was nailed to the cross, as he suffered death for all mankind, there arose a great storm in the land of the Nephites--a terrible tempest such as had never been known: sharp lightning, and terrible thunder; whirlwinds ravaged the land; highways were broken up; many great cities were destroyed and their inhabitants slain; the face of the whole land was changed because of the fury of the tempest which, for three hours, shook the very earth as if it would divide asunder.

Piano/Organ: "...this great and terrible day..."

When the tempest ceased, a great darkness fell upon them: a palpable vapor, black as the grave. No fire would kindle, no candle would burn. No glimmer of sun nor moon nor stars was seen. The people mourned and wept, crying, "O that we had repented before this great and terrible day..."

And in the darkness they heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Woe unto this people...except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people... and it is because of their iniquity... that they are fallen! ...O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?"

After three days, the mist of darkness lifted. Those who had been spared gathered together at the temple, marveling at the things which had happened. And as they thus stood, they heard a voice speak to them from heaven: neither a harsh voice, nor loud, but it pierced their very souls and made their hearts burn within them, though they did not understand it.

Again they heard the voice, and again they did not understand. A third time they heard it, and as they looked steadfastly toward heaven whence it came, they understood at last:

"Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name--hear ye him."

And as they understood, they looked and beheld a Man descending out of heaven, clothed in white, and he came down and stood in the midst of them. The eyes of the whole multitude were upon him, and no man spoke. And he stretched forth his hand and said:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. ...I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me... ...Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world."

"I Am Jesus Christ"

*"I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets said shall come,
I have drunk the bitter cup that the Father's will be done."*

He who bore our pain and grief, he who died to pay our debt

He who carried our afflictions, he who triumphed over death.

"I am Jesus Christ." Oh wondrous, welcome word!

*"I am Jesus Christ, I am the Light and the Life of the world!"
Thus spake the Son of God, who was slain on Calvary,
"Behold, I am Jesus Christ. Arise, come unto me..."*

The multitude went forth one by one. They touched the wound in his side, and felt the prints of the nails in his hands and feet. And when they had all gone forth and each one had seen with his own eyes, and felt with his own hands and knew of a surety that it was he of whom the prophets had spoken, they cried out with one accord saying, "Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the most high God." And they fell down at his feet and worshipped him.

Then Jesus taught the multitude, even as he had taught during his mortal ministry among the Jews. He taught them to pray, to be meek and humble, to be merciful and quick to forgive. He taught them to give freely of their worldly wealth, and lay up for themselves the treasures of heaven. He taught them to love their enemies, and commanded that they should not contend with one another, but live in peace.

Come Listen to the Savior's Voice

*Come listen to the Savior's voice, come hear his gentle words of peace,
Come listen to the Savior's voice in reverent, wondering awe.
He bids us put all anger by, and every trespass set aside,
He bids us put all anger by and make his love our law.
 He bids us turn away from sin; he offers mercy to all men
 He bids us turn away from sin and live as he would live
 He bids the humble soul repent, and seek his grace with pure intent
 He bids the humble soul repent, for such he will receive.
He speaks to comfort those who mourn, who seek their solace in the Lord
He speaks to comfort those who mourn, and in his word is hope.
Come bring your broken heart to him, the contrite spirit's offering
Come bring your broken heart to him and he will make you whole.*

When Jesus had finished, he looked on them with compassion, perceiving that they were weak and weary, and did not understand all that he had said. He bade them return to their homes to rest and ponder the things he had taught, and on the morrow he would speak to them again.

But as he looked round about him, the multitude did not move. The years of watching and waiting for their Lord had been long. And now, as Jesus Christ their Redeemer stood before them at last, they were unwilling to be parted from him so soon. As Jesus looked upon them, the multitude were in tears, and they gazed at him in longing, as though they would ask him to remain with them a little longer.

Stay With Me, Lord Jesus, Stay

*Stay with me, Lord Jesus, stay. Linger yet awhile I pray
So long my heart has yearned for thee, in joy and sorrow turned to thee,
And gladly would I learn of thee. Stay with me, Lord Jesus, stay.
 Stay with me, Lord Jesus, stay. Chasten me if I should stray.
 Keep my feet where thou hast trod, reconcile my soul to God,
 I bow beneath thy loving rod. Stay with me, Lord Jesus, stay.
Stay with me, Lord Jesus, stay. Thou my Life, my Truth, my Way,
When clouds of darkness dim my sight, be thou my sure unfailing light,*

*Through every shadow of the night, stay with me, Lord Jesus, stay.
Stay with me, Lord Jesus, stay.*

The Lord was filled with compassion for the multitude who so earnestly desired him to remain. "Have ye any that are sick among you?" he asked. "Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind... or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you..." And he healed them, every one as they were brought forth unto him.

Then Jesus bade them bring their little children to him. So they took their little ones and set them down upon the ground round about him. Then he knelt and prayed, and the multitude bore record saying, "The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father... and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us.

Then he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed for them, and wept. And he spoke to the multitude saying, "Behold your little ones." And as they looked, they saw the heavens open, and angels descending as if in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled the little children with fire, and ministered to them.

One By One

*Bring your little children nigh, so the Savior said,
One by one they gathered round where the Savior stood
One by one they heard him pray in words no tongue can tell
As one by one they learned of love from him who loved them well.
He blessed each precious daughter; he blessed each cherished son.
And through the tears he shed, the Savior said,
"Behold your little ones!"
And from the realms of light, celestial bright, the host of angels came
Encircling the little ones in heaven's holy flame.
One by one the little ones looked into his face
One by one he took each one in his arms' embrace
One by one he blessed them all and called each one by name
And one by one they felt his love and gave their hearts to him.*

Jesus came among the Nephites often, ministering to them and teaching them his gospel, and all who remained in the land were converted to the Lord and united to the Church of Christ.

The people of that generation were blessed with peace and prosperity, such as had never before been known among them. There was no strife, no envy, no lying, nor robbers nor murderers. And how blessed were they! For by the love of God which dwelt in their hearts, the Nephites became a people united, of one heart, the children of Christ, heirs to the kingdom of God.

Make Us One

*How shall we stand amid uncertainty? Where is our comfort in travail?
How shall we walk amid infirmity, when feeble limbs are worn and frail?
And as we pass through mortal sorrow, how shall our hearts abide the day?
Where is the strength the soul may borrow? Teach us thy way.
Make us one, that our burdens may be light
Make us one as we seek eternal life*

*Unite our hands to serve thy children well
Unite us in obedience to thy will
Make us one, teach us, Lord, to be of one faith,
Of one heart, one in thee.*

*Then shall our souls be filled with charity, then shall all hate and anger cease,
And though we strive amid adversity, yet shall we find thy perfect peace.
So shall we stand despite our weakness, so shall our strength be strength enough.
We bring our hearts to thee in meekness, Lord wilt thou bind them in thy love?
Take from me this heart of stone, and make it flesh even as thine own.
Take from me unfeeling pride, teach me compassion, cast my fear aside
Give us one heart, give us one mind, Lord make us thine, Oh, make us thine!*

The Nephites became a fair and delightsome people because of their great love for the Lord. There was no contention among them, and every man dealt justly with his neighbor. There were no rich nor poor, no bond nor free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the Heavenly gift. And surely there could not be a happier people among all who had been created by the hand of God. The Lord prospered them in all that they did, for as long as they continued to love and serve him.

Such is the peace and joy he promises to all his children--in every land, in every generation--who will love and serve him. Amid the confusion and violence of our own time, the Savior's unvarying invitation is extended still:

"Come unto me... and I will give you rest... ..And whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me."

"Come unto Christ... ..seek this Jesus of whom the apostles and prophets have written." Come unto Christ who offers you perfect peace, lasting joy, and eternal life."

Come Unto Christ

*Come unto Christ, ye penitent and meek
Seek this Jesus of whom the prophets speak
Seek this Jesus whose mercies never cease
Come unto Christ and find in him eternal peace.
Come unto Christ who bore our griefs alone
Who will carry our burdens as his own
Seek this Jesus, and by his love be blessed
Come unto Christ and find in him eternal rest
Come unto Christ, ye sorrowful and frail
Seek this Jesus whose comfort cannot fail
Seek this Jesus and triumph in his might
Come unto Christ, Come unto Christ!
Come unto Christ, abide in him and live
He will bless you with every perfect gift
Seek this Jesus amid a world of strife
Come unto Christ and find in him eternal life.*