

**“Songs of the Season –
The First Noel”**
Luke 2:8-15

Definition

Noel – Christmas carol, or Christmas season.

Webster's Dictionary

Background

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Mystery Plays -- dramatizations of biblical stories -- were quite popular. A favorite play topic was Jesus' birth. These events were often orchestrated by singers, writers, and musicians.

christmas.howstuffworks.com

Background

- “The First Noel” is among our oldest carols. It dates back at least 500 years, though it was not written down and published until the 1800s. Most music historians believe the song originated in England, though it has been attributed to both England and France. The word “Noel” fits easily into both languages as a shout of joy at the birth of Christ. Some sources trace “Noel” to a Latin word meaning “birthday.” First sung at a time when few people could read and few Bibles were in circulation, the words are based more on stories people heard about the birth of Christ than on exact scripture.

Background

- The carol was reportedly sung each year by English peasants as they lit the family Yule log. The Yule log was a custom adopted during the middle ages from Norse tradition. A huge log was cut, hollowed out and filled with aromatic oils and spices. It was lit on Christmas Eve with the hope it would burn through the 12 days of Christmas ending on January 6.

Background

- The early church looked down on peasant songs that they felt lacked the solemnity of true hymns. Consequently, “The First Noel” was not used in church services during the first several hundred years of its existence. Finally the song was published and the Church of England began using it in Christmas services in the mid-1800s.

folkmusic.suite101.com

Background

We can blame the ancient church for a large part of our uncertainty (*regarding the date of Jesus' birth*). You see, they did not celebrate Christ's birth. At all. To them, it was insignificant. They were far more concerned with his death...and the resurrection.

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Luke 2:8-15

- 8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
- 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
- 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
- 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:8-15

- 12 And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
- 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
- 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
- 15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

The First Noel

- The Messenger
- The Men Informed
- The Message
- The Messiah

The First Noel

- The Messenger

The Messenger

Luke 2:9

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The First Noel

- The Messenger
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The Men Informed

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

- In modern times, the traditional date has been challenged. Modern scholars point out that when Jesus was born, shepherds were watching their sheep in the hills around Bethlehem. Luke tells us that an angel appeared to "some shepherds staying out in the fields [who were] keeping watch over their flock by night" (2:8).

Some scholars feel that the sheep were usually brought under cover from November to March; as well, they were not normally in the field *at night*. But there is no hard evidence for this. In fact, early Jewish sources suggest that the sheep around *Bethlehem* were outside year-round. So you can see, December 25th fits both tradition and the biblical narrative well. There is no sound objection to it.

Now admittedly, the sheep around Bethlehem were the exception, not the rule. But these were no ordinary sheep. They were *sacrificial* lambs. In the early spring they would be slaughtered at the Passover.

And God *first* revealed the Messiah's birth to *these* shepherds--shepherds who protected harmless lambs which would soon die on behalf of sinful men. Why they saw the baby, could they have known? Might they have whispered in their hearts what John the Baptist later thundered, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

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14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

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Lyrics

- The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields
as they lay;
In fields where they lay tending their
sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so
deep.

Lyrics

For all to see there was a star
Shining in the east, beyond them far
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continues both day and night

Lyrics

- And by the light of that same star
Three Wise Men came from country far;
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went

Lyrics

- Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord;
That hath made Heaven and earth of
naught,
And with His blood mankind hath
bought.

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The word "Messiah" means "Anointed One," the name given to the promised Deliverer who would some day come to the people of Israel as their great Savior and Redeemer, "anointed" as Prophet, Priest, and King by God Himself.

Some, of course, are still looking for the fulfillment of these Old Testament promises in the future, when the "Messiah" will come to establish a world kingdom of peace and justice centered around the chosen nation, Israel.

On the other hand, the group of Jewish believers who became the first founders of Christianity were convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was their promised Messiah. The name "Christ" is the Greek equivalent of "Messiah," so that the name Jesus Christ really means "Jesus the Messiah," or "Jesus the anointed." They preached this truth with such conviction and power that not only many Jews but, later, a still greater host of Gentiles, believed on Jesus, both as the Christ and also as the Lord and Savior of all men.

christiananswers.net

The Messiah

Luke 2:25-35

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

The Messiah

Luke 2:25-35

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

The Messiah

Isaiah 42:6-7

6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

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