

Do You Hear What I Hear? **It Came Upon the Midnight Clear**

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear: It started as a poem by Massachusetts minister, Edmund Sears in 1849. Deeply saddened by the land wars that were raging in Europe, as well as the recently concluded United States war with Mexico, and still recovering from his own depression, he wrote this poem to show how the birth of Jesus forever altered the condition of the world for the better. The melody was added to his poem a year later.

Four Biblical Themes in this Classic Christmas Carol

I. Unexpected Good News – *“It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold; ‘Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven’s all-gracious King.’ The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.”*

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, & saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’”

Luke 2:13-14 (KJV)

“That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them...” **2 Corinthians 5:19**

II. Heaven Celebrates Over a Weary World – *“Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled, and still their heavenly music floats o’er all the weary world; above it sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing, and ever o’er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.”*

“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.” **Psalms 96:11-13 (Heaven Celebrates God’s Arrival)**

“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, ‘The LORD reigns!’” **1 Chronicles 16:31 (Heaven Celebrates that God Reigns)**

“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 15:10 (Heaven Celebrates a Person Saved)

III. Life Without Christ Is Crushing – *“And ye, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing. O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.”*

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” **Ephesians 2:1-3**

Truth: This sad & lonely existence is reality for so many. Toiling along, following the world in pursuit of happiness, deceived by Satan, enslaved by our sin, and under the wrath of God.

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” **Ephesians 2:4-6**

IV. Jesus Lowly Birth Foreshadows His Glorious Return – *“For lo! The days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old, when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.”*

The final verse describes time passing on, but it describes time as driving to a moment. It’s telling us something about that baby in Bethlehem who lived the perfect life we couldn’t live, died the death we should have died, rose again on the third day, and ascended back to heaven before the disciples’ eyes...He’s coming back!!!

“So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” **Hebrews 9:28**

“Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’” **Revelation 5:11-12**

This Christmas Carol is all about the birth of Jesus, and why shouldn’t it be? Look at it this way: human beings like us throughout history and in present day are struggling under the crushing load of life. So much is wrong and full of sadness. There are glimpses of joy, goodness, and hope, but they are only that...glimpses. And...

“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” **Matthew 5:48**

Impossible Spot: While struggling under the effects of a sinful world, we are also buried by the effects of our sinful nature and choices that keep us from a right relationship with God.

“The birth of Christ means God provides what he requires – perfect righteousness.” **Dustin Bengtson**

The Birth of Jesus: God knew just how devastating sin’s curse was, so he provided the cure!

“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.” **Colossians 1:21-22**

The birth of Jesus is good news to all those who know how devastating the effects of sin are in the world and in our own lives. If you have not yet turned away from sin and placed your trust in Jesus, that is the best thing you could possibly do this Christmas!

Sources & Further Reading Opportunities:

- *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* – Elwell & Comfort (2001)
- *Tony Evans Book of Illustrations* – Tony Evans (2009)
- *United Methodist Hymnal* – (1989)
- *Sermons and Songs of Christian Life* - Library of Congress (2022)

