

THE CAROLS OF CHRISTMAS:**#3 – AWAY IN A MANGER**

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:1-7

Origins: Recently rated as the 2nd most popular of the Christmas Carols, the origin of the words are obscure. Originally attributed to Martin Luther and called “Luther’s Cradle Song,” it is now thought to be of American origins and appeared in the mid-1880’s. The music was composed by John R Murphy and first published in 1887. The standard melody in England is different. The third verse was later created by John T. McFarland. The style of Away in a Manger is a lullaby.

Away in a manger no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head. The stars in the sky look down where He lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay. – 1st verse

I. Jesus: His Amazing Birth

- *Jesus’ birth reflects the upside down nature of God’s _____* – God’s kingdom and ways are often vastly different – even opposite from man’s logic and ways. Mankind rebelled against God. Rather than striking us down in punishment (which would have been just), God sent His Son to redeem mankind and restore their relationship to God. Amazing!
- *Jesus’ birth was in _____ circumstances* – Unlike people in the world who are rich, powerful, royalty, or famous whose children are born in the world’s spotlight, Jesus was born as a nobody peasant that the world didn’t note or care about. His humble circumstances are symbolized by the dirty stable and manger bed. The son of God, Creator of the World, and owner of all things, born in humble circumstances. Amazing!

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on who his favor rests.” Luke 2:13-14

- *Jesus’ birth had _____ significance* – The “stars in the sky” symbolize Heaven/the spiritual realm. While the world took no notice of Jesus’ birth, the countless multitudes of Heaven looked on, rejoiced, and glorified God. For the greatest event in cosmic history. Amazing!

The cattle are lowing the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes. I love Thee, Lord Jesus look down from the sky, and stay by my cradle till morning in nigh – 2nd verse

II. Jesus – both God and Man

- *Jesus was fully _____* – It is in verse 2 that “Away in a Manger” stumbles in incorrect theology when it says “but little Lord Jesus no crying He makes” as if He was too

divine to cry as a mere human. Wrong! As fully human, Jesus would experience and respond to the world like any other baby! He cried. Don't minimize Jesus' humanity.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" John 8:58

- **Jesus was fully _____** – Though fully man, He was (and is) fully God – and without sin. Only a divine and sinless Jesus could be our Savior. This is a paradox (a statement that seems contradictory, illogical, or unbelievable but is true); but with God, all things are possible!

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay close by me forever and love me I pray. Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care, and fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there – 3rd verse

III. Jesus, Near to Us Through Prayer

- **Through _____, we can draw near to Jesus** – Almost all Christmas carols are sung about Jesus. Away in a Manger verse 3 is an intimate prayer to Jesus. It is a request to be close to Jesus in presence and relationship. When we find ourselves fearful and alone, we can ask Jesus to be with us and we can feel His presence, love, and care. Jesus is not a distant and uncaring God, but and up close and personal savior. All we have to do is pray!
- **Through prayer, He _____ us and "fits" us** – Our prayers shouldn't be just for Jesus to be close to us and bless us, but also to "fit" us for Heaven. We are to grow spiritually in to Christlike nature, becoming more holy. Our prayer to become more like Jesus so we are a better fit for our eternity in Heaven. Currently, many of us aren't a good "fit" for Heaven, and it is going to be culture shock when we get to Heaven! Pray that we will grow into a better fit for Heaven.

IV. Our Response to Away in a Manger

- **Away from the Manger** – A Christmas that's celebrated away from the Manger – without Jesus as the focus. It's about family, fun, and festivities.
- **No way in the Manger** – No belief in God or the gift of His Son. Christmas is an empty and meaningless time.
- **A way in the Manger** – Jesus is simply one more choice in the many religions and gods to choose from. All the choices are equally true and legitimate.
- **My way in the Manger** – We believe we have the right to remake Jesus into whatever god we choose to believe in. Jesus is clay in our creative hands.
- **The way in the Manger** – We accept Jesus on His terms as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is the only Son of God, the only Savior, and the only Lord in our lives.

Which response will you choose?

Answers: I. Kingdom; humble; cosmic. II. Human; God. III. Prayer; guides.