

Readings for a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Nine Lessons and Carols, King's College, Cambridge. Downloaded from

https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Text/Carol_Service/readings_for_a_festival_of_nine.htm Hymns included later on.

All recordings of the lessons below by Douglas D. Anderson.

All hymns by the choir of King's College Chapel, Cambridge.

Once in royal David's city <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TT3cfXd3Shk>

BIDDING PRAYER (MP3 / OGG)

The Dean: Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmas Eve our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the angels: in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and with the Magi adore the Child lying in his Mother's arms.

Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child; and let us make this chapel, dedicated to his pure and lowly Mother, glad with our carols of praise:

But first let us pray for the needs of his whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for unity and brotherhood within the Church he came to build, within the dominions of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth, within this University and City of Cambridge, and in the two royal and religious Foundations of King Henry VI here and at Eton: And let us at this time remember in his name the poor and the helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed; the sick in body and in mind and them that mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; and all who know not the loving kindness of God.

Lastly let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no man can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom we for evermore are one. These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us: Our Father...

All: Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

O come o come Emmanuel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcIIZpnZPgo>

FIRST LESSON (MP3 / OGG)

God tells sinful Adam that he has lost the life of Paradise and that his seed will bruise the serpent's head. Genesis 3

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy

life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.
Thanks be to God

The First Nowell <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kt1m7sPaRuA>

SECOND LESSON (MP3 / OGG)

God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Genesis 22

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.
Thanks be to God

THIRD LESSON (MP3 / OGG)

The prophet foretells the coming of the Saviour. Isaiah 9

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.
Thanks be to God

In The Bleak Midwinter <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0aL9rKJPr4>

FOURTH LESSON (MP3 / OGG)

The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown. Isaiah 11

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.
Thanks be to God

O Little Town of Bethlehem <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJggspX57C0>

FIFTH LESSON (MP3 / OGG)

The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary. St Luke 1

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.
Thanks be to God

O Holy Night https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTFG_nvreoI

SIXTH LESSON (MP3 / OGG)

St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus. St Luke 2

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.
Thanks be to God

Hark the Herald Angels Sing https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_iLXNSIaYc

SEVENTH LESSON (MP3 / OGG)

The shepherds go to the manger. St Luke 2

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. 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. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
Thanks be to God

God rest you merry gentlemen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdScvjNCfSA>

EIGHTH LESSON (MP3 / OGG)

The wise men are led by the star to Jesus. St Matthew 2

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Thanks be to God

O Come, All Ye Faithful <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiJhJIYbVQ4>

NINTH LESSON (MP3 / OGG)

The congregation stands for the Ninth Lesson.

St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation. St John 1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Thanks be to God

COLLECT & BLESSING (MP3 / OGG)

The Dean: Let us pray.

O God, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thy only son, Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him, when he shall come to be our judge; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

All: Amen.

Hymns A festival of nine lessons

Once in Royal David's city

Once in royal David's city Stood a lowly cattle shed, Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed: Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven, Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable, And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly, Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And through all His wondrous childhood He would honour and obey Love and watch the
lowly maiden In whose gentle arms He lay
Christian children all should be Mild, obedient, good as He

For He is our child-hood's pattern Day by day like us He grew
He was little, weak, and helpless Tears and smiles like us He knew
And He feeleth for our sadness And He shareth in our gladness

And our eyes at last shall see Him Through His own redeeming love;
For that child so dear and gentle Is our Lord in heaven above
And He leads His children on To the place where He is gone

Not in that poor lowly stable With the oxen standing by
We shall see Him, but in heaven Set at God's right hand on high;
When like stars His children crowned All in white shall be around

O come, O come, Emmanuel!

O come, O come, Emmanuel! Redeem thy captive Israel That into exile drear is gone,
Far from the face of God's dear Son. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Branch of Jesse! Draw The quarry from the lion's claw; From the dread
caverns of the grave, From nether hell, thy people save. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, thou Dayspring bright! Pour on our souls thy healing light;
Dispel the long night's lingering gloom, And pierce the shadows of the tomb.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O Come, thou Lord of David's Key! The royal door fling wide and free;
Safeguard for us the heavenward road, And bar the way to death's abode.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Adonai, Who in thy glorious majesty From that high mountain clothed
in awe, Gavest thy folk the elder Law. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

The first nowell.

The first nowell the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, born is the King of Israel.

They lookèd up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, born is the King of Israel.

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.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, born is the King of Israel.

This star drew nigh to the north-west: o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay, right over the place where Jesus lay.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, born is the King of Israel.

Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heavenly Lord
who hath made heaven and earth of nought, and with his blood mankind hath bought.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell, born is the King of Israel.

In the bleak midwinter

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow
In the bleak midwinter, long ago

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The lord God almighty, Jesus Christ

Enough for Him, whom cherubim Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom angels Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel Which adore.

Angels and archangels May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim Thronged the air,
But only His mother In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the Beloved With a kiss.

What can I give Him, Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give Him, Give my heart.

O little town of Bethlehem

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 dark streets shineth The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight

O morning stars together Proclaim the holy birth A
nd praises sing to God the King And Peace to men on earth
For Christ is born of Mary And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep Their watch of wondering love

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

O holy Child of Bethlehem Descend to us, we pray Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born to us today We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel O come to us, abide with us Our Lord Emmanuel

O Holy night

O Holy Night! The stars are brightly shining, It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining. Till He appeared and the Spirit felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn. Fall
on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born; O night divine! O night, O night divine!

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming, With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star is sweetly gleaming, Here came the wisemen from the Orient
land.

The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger; In all our trials born to be our friend.
He knows our need, to our weakness, no stranger, Behold your King! Before him lowly
bend! Behold your King! Our King, before him bend!

Truly He taught us to love one another, His law is love, and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother. And in his name all oppression shall
cease.

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we, With all our hearts we praise His holy
name. Christ is the Lord! Then ever, ever praise we, His power and glory ever more we
shall proclaim! His power and glory ever more proclaim!

Hark! the herald angels sing

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King, peace on earth, and mercy
mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies; with th' angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity, pleased as man with man to
dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of
earth, born to give us second birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

God rest ye merry, gentlemen

God rest ye merry, gentlemen, Let nothing you dismay, For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born upon this day, To save us all from Satan's power When we were gone astray:
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, O tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our heavenly Father a blessèd angel came; And unto certain shepherds
brought tidings of the same; How that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by name
O tidings ...

The shepherds at those tidings Rejoicèd much in mind, And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm and wind, And went to Bethlehem straightway, This blessèd Babe to
find: *O tidings ...*

But when to Bethlehem they came, Whereat this Infant lay, They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay; His mother Mary kneeling, Unto the Lord did pray: *O tidings ...*

Now to the Lord sing praises, All you within this place, And with true love and
brotherhood Each other now embrace; This holy tide of Christmas All others doth deface:
O tidings ...

O come all ye faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant! O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him Born the King of Angels: O come, let us adore Him, (3×)
Christ the Lord.

God of God, light of light, Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten, not created: O come, let us adore Him, (3×)
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!
Glory to God, glory in the highest: O come, let us adore Him, (3×)
Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be glory given!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing! O come, let us adore Him, (3×)
Christ the Lord.