

Advent 1, 2022

"O come, O come, Emmanuel" (Latin: "Veni, veni, Emmanuel") is a hymn often sung in Advent. The text was originally written in Latin, it has its origins over 1,200 years ago in monastic life in the 8th or 9th century.

Seven days before Christmas Eve, monasteries would sing the "O antiphons" in anticipation of Christmas Eve. The Latin metrical form of the hymn was composed as early as the 12th century. The 1851 translation by John Mason Neale, found in 'Hymns Ancient and Modern', is the most familiar, but other English translations also exist.

As we move into the final weeks before Christmas we look together at five verses of the hymn (there are seven in the original Latin). I have included a translation from the old Latin text as well as the familiar words from the 'modern' hymn.

*O Adonai, and leader of the House of Israel,
Who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush
And gave him the law on Sinai:
Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.*

*O come, O come, thou Lord of Might
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law,
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

This is the first verse in the original format and verse five in the modern version.. 'Adonai' means 'Master' or 'Lord' - 'the one who rules over us'. He is the Redeemer of Israel, see Job chapter 19, verse 25; Psalm 19, verse 14; Isaiah chapter 41, verse 14 and chapter 47, verse 4.

We need to recognise the unity of God and the importance of Old Testament scripture – compare with Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 – 2.

As we pray "Amen, Come Lord Jesus!" (Revelation chapter 22, verse 20) we are praying to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to come and save, restore and renew the world which they jointly created:- see Colossians chapter 1, verses 15 – 19.

The God who gave the law on Sinai is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For encouragement in these dark days before Christmas, read Revelation chapter 21, verses 1 – 5 and chapter 22, verses 1 – 7.

He says "Surely I am coming soon." Amen, Come, Lord Jesus!