

A Cappella Christmas Cantata - text

1) First Fruits - George Herbert (1593-1633); Philippians 2:5-7

Lord, my first fruits present themselves to Thee;
Yet not mine neither, for from Thee they came,
And must return. Accept of them and me.

For Thou, God Almighty, emptied of Yourself.
In the form of a servant, born in human likeness,
You emptied of Yourself.
May the same mind be in me.

Lord, my first fruits present themselves to Thee;
Yet not mine neither: for from Thee they came,
And must return. Accept of them and me.
And make us strive, who shall sing best Thy name.

2) Behold, a Great Light - Isaiah 9:2 (c. 740 BC)

O people, walking in darkness, behold, a great great light has dawned upon you.
O people, dwelling in shadow, behold, a great great light has dawned upon you.

3) Break Forth, O Beautiful Light - Johann Rist (1641)

Break forth, O beautiful light and usher in the glorious morning.
Break forth, O heavenly light, let all darkness flee away.
O Shepherds, do not fear, for the angels bring great news of joy!
O Shepherds, do not fear, for the Light of the world has come.

The Child, now weak in infancy, our confidence and joy shall be
for the Light of the world has come.
The power of Satan breaking, our peace eternal making.
Break forth, O beautiful Light.

4) Mary Treasured all These Things - Luke 1, 2; Isaiah 40

One day the Lord sent an angel to a virgin in Galilee
"Greetings to you, highly favoured one" - what kind of sign could this be?
The angel declared, "Do not be afraid, you will give birth to a Son."
Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the countryside.
Elizabeth met Mary at the door with her baby leaping inside.
"Blessed are you among women among women and blessed is the Child you will bear."
Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

5) Joseph's Dream - part one - Matthew 1:20

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid.
Take Mary as your wife - do not be afraid - the Child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit

6) Caesar Augustus - Luke 2:1-4

Caesar Augustus issued a decree.
Enrolment to be taken of the Roman world.
Everyone went to their home town, everyone went to be taxed.
Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth to Judea.

7) No Room - Luke 2:7; Matthew 8:28; Phillipians 2:6; II Corinthians 8:9

No room, no room in the inn.
Mary laid her Baby in a manger.
No room, no room in the inn.

Foxes have holes, birds have their nest.
Where does the Son of God lay His Head?

Though He was rich, He became poor.
Now by His poverty we are wealthy.

8) The Grief of Pleasure - - George Herbert (1593-1633)

After all pleasures as I rid one day,
My horse and I, both tired, body and mind,
With full cry of affections, quite astray;
I took up the next inn I could find.

There when I came, whom found I but my dear,
My dearest Lord, expecting till the grief
Of pleasures brought me to Him, ready there
To be all passengers' most sweet relief?

Oh Thou, whose glorious, yet contracted light,
Wrapt in night's mantle, stole into a manger;

9) Tidings of Joy - Luke 2:8-18

Shepherds in the field near by
watching o'er their flocks by night
Lo, the angel of the Lord appeared before them
"Fear not, I bring you news of great great joy!
Lo, born for you this day is Christ the Lord."

Suddenly, up above, breaking forth, praising God -
"Glory to God, all glory to God in the highest!"

Glory to God, tidings of joy.
Peace on the earth, good will to all.
Glory to God, tidings of joy.
Peace on the earth, tidings of great joy!

Joy unto you is born this day the long awaited Saviour.
Joy unto you is born this day, our prophesied Messiah.
Hope of the world, our Prince of Peace, Christ our Redeemer.
Tidings of Joy!

Glory to God, tidings of Joy.
Go to the manger and worship the Baby.
Tidings of Great joy!

10) Herod the Ruler - Matthew 2:3-8; Micah 5:2

Herod, the Ruler, said to the Magi, "Come back this way and tell me where to find Him.
Carefully look for the Baby. Carefully search for the Child."
For so it has been written by the ancient prophet, so it has been written many years ago.
"O, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, from out of you will come a Counselor."

11) Joseph's Dream - part two - Matthew 2:13, 21

Joseph, son of David, awake from your slumber.
Three magi came to worship, bringing precious treasure.
How Herod brings grave danger.
Make haste. Take Mary and the Baby and flee to Egypt.

12) There a Cry Over Bethlehem - part two - Matthew 2:13-18

There's a cry over Bethlehem, there's a wail of sorrow below.
There's a cry over Bethlehem, all the baby boys have been destroyed.

In a dream came a warning, "Stay away from Herod the great."
So the Magi travelled home the other way, and the news he wanted came to late.

Then the angel spoke to Joseph, "Take the Child with Mary and hide."
So the family hurried down to Egypt and remained secluded for awhile.

Herod waited for his messengers but they never would return.
In a rage he gave an order, "Kill all the baby boys two years and under!"

There's a cry over Bethlehem, there's a wail of sorrow below.
There's a cry over Bethlehem, all the baby boys have been destroyed.

13) Joseph Made a Treasure-box - Matthew 2:11

Joseph made a treasure-box from the wood of an olive tree;
crafted it so tenderly and gave it to his wife, Mary.

Mary took that treasure-box and laid it upon her knee.
"Here, within my treasure-box, I will keep our treasures three"

Golden bracelet for His tiny arm - symbol of royalty.
Fairest Lord Jesus, make me pure, I long to worship Thee.

Frankincense to make the air smell sweet - symbol of deity.
All of our praise rises up to Thee, Holy Nativity.

Bitter myrrh to use in time of death - curse of humanity.
Lord, I will praise Thee with every breath - for all eternity.

Joseph made a treasure-box from the wood of an olive tree.

14) Little Lamb - William Blake c. 1789

Little Lamb who made thee?
Do you know who made thee?
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee
Little Lamb I'll tell thee
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

15) Behold, a Great Light - reprise - Isaiah 9:2 (c. 740 BC), Luke 2:14

O people, comfort and joy. O people, comfort to all. O people, peace and goodwill.
O people, lift up your eyes. O people, sing and rejoice. Behold, a great great light has dawned upon you.