

Joy To The World - A Christmas Hymn Reconsidered

Written in 1719 by English minister & hymn writer, Isaac Watts - who also wrote "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross". Watts grew up in a world where the music in every worship service consisted only of Psalms or sections of Scripture put to music. Watts found the practice monotonous. To him, there was a lack of joy and emotion among the congregants as they sang. He once famously said, "To see the dull indifference, the negligent and thoughtless air that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly, while the psalm is upon their lips, might even tempt a charitable observer to suspect the fervency of their inward religion."

Watts was inspired to write the tune "Joy to The World" while meditating on Psalm 98, especially verse 4 - "Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!" Initially, the popular hymn was not considered a Christmas Hymn. The lyrics were meant to reference Christ's second return. Over time, it has been adopted as a Christmas Hymn. This song is all about the fulfillment of what Christ came to do in the first place. Christmas is not only a time to look back at the grace accomplished in the past. Christmas is also a time to look forward to the grace that was accomplished for our future. When we sing these words we are proclaiming the ultimate joy to be revealed. This is why we can sing "Joy to the World" at any time - not just Christmas! So smile & sing joyfully as we celebrate the both comings of our Lord, Jesus Christ.