

***Favorite Christmas Carols (8:30 & 11)***  
***Christmas Playlist (Jubilee)***  
***Week 2***

**JOY TO THE WORLD**  
**Psalm 98**

INTRO: We're in a series called "Favorite Christmas Carols"

And today we're gonna talk about one of your favorite Christmas carols that is NOT a Christmas carol!

Yes, you heard me right: Joy to the World is not a Christmas carol.

-But we'll come back to that.

**I. JTTW was written in 1719 by the famous hymn writer Isaac Watts-**

**A. Born into strong Christian family**

- **When born, father was in prison. Why? Bec he wouldn't go along with the state church, C of E**
- **A boy genius – Latin at age 5, Greek at 9, French at 11, Hebrew at 13**
- **Around 6 or 7 family was having prayers- he saw a mouse run up the rope to the bell and he giggled. Very pious father said, "What were you doing with your eyes open during prayer?"**

Isaac:

"A little mouse for want of stairs,  
 ran up the rope to say his prayers.

Father went to spank him, Isaac:

"Father, Father, pity take,  
 and I no more will verses make!"

- He was first freestyle rapper!

B. He was also first writer of contemporary Christian music

1- In our day there's kind of a division between traditional and contemporary –the worship wars [desc]

- Some churches have split over this issue

--Isaac Watts did the same thing in his day – split churches by writing contemporary worship music!

--You say, What are you talking about? He wrote HYMNS

-Understand: In his day, Christians didn't sing hymns – they were only allowed to sing the Psalms, right out of the Old Testament

-One day came home from church and complained that the music was boring.

- Father said, "Why don't you write something better?"

- And he did!

**Behold the glories of the Lamb  
Amidst His Father's throne.  
Prepare new honors for His Name,  
And songs before unknown.**

And the congregation loved it. So he began writing a new hymn every week

2- Eventually published some of his hymns – and that's when the controversy began:

- Great leaders of the church began to denounce Isaac Watts for destroying tradition and bringing new music into the churches.

- One leader: "*Christian congregations have shut out divinely inspired psalms and taken in Watts's flights of fancy,*"

And so began the worship wars of the 1700s:

- Churches split
- Pastors were fired
- Arguments raged about whether this new contemporary music was appropriate for the house of God

Some of the outlandish contemporary worship songs Isaac Watts wrote included:

- When I survey the wondrous cross
- Alas and did my savior bleed
- Marching to Zion

--Crazy stuff!

3- What really pushed people over the edge was when Watts put out a book of new songs entitled, *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*

- He wanted to re-write the Psalms the way David would have written them if he were alive in his day
- AND he wanted to identify and make clear the CHRISTIAN themes that he saw in the Psalms

So, Psalm 72 became the hymn, "Jesus shall reign"

- Psalm 90 became, "O God our help in ages Past"

-- *And Psalm 98 became, "Joy to the World."*

C. Please take out your hymnal and turn to #246. And while you're turning, I'm going to tell you something about Joy to the World that you probably didn't know.

Joy to the World is not a Christmas song!

1- Isaac Watts did not write it as a Christmas song

- What Isaac Watts was really writing about was the second coming of Christ
- When Js comes again as a king in glory and establishes his kingdom on earth

2- You can definitely see this when you look at vv. 2, 3, 4

**-V. 2** starts off **Joy to the world, the savior reigns** – coming kingdom

**-V. 3 –**

- **No more let sins and sorrows grow** –well, unfortunately, sins and sorrows are still growing, to this very day, so what that line talks about has not happened yet
- **Nor thorns infest the ground** – what is that about? In Genesis 3, when the first humans sinned, God said because of what you did the whole earth is fallen, and thorns are gonna infest the ground
- **He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found** – that's a reference to the curse talked about in Genesis 3

-- and it's looking forward to a time when that curse is overcome by Jesus, in other words, the coming kingdom

**-V. 4 –**

- **He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love**

--Again, that hasn't happened yet:

Scripture tells us that day is coming – when Jesus will rule and people of every nation, tribe, race and tongue will sing his praise –

-- But right now, we now are still waiting for that day

## **II. SO- Joy to the World = not a Christmas song –**

**-Not based on the Christmas story in the gospel of Luke**

**--It's a song about the end of time, and it's based on Psalm 98**

A. So let's take a look at Psalm 98 –

1- Turn in your hymnal to page 818.

(Read responsively)

O sing to the Lord a new song, for the Lord has done marvelous things.

God's right hand and holy arm have gotten the victory.

**2 The Lord has declared victory and has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.**

**3 The Lord has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.**

**All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God**

2- NOW: In those three verses, the words “victory” and “vindication” come from the Hebrew word for salvation, which is *yeshua*

- And that is the Hebrew Name of ... Jesus!

And Isaac Watts knew Hebrew, so he definitely saw this as an Old Testament Psalm that points forward to Jesus!

B. Now the next 3 verses are a call to worship:

**4 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;  
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.**

**5 Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,  
with the lyre and the sound of melody.**

**6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise  
before the Ruler, the Lord.**

These last 3 verses talk about *all people* praising God, and that's what Isaac Watts was talking about when he wrote,

**Let all their songs employ**

C. Now, on these last verses, just listen:

Verses 7 & 8 foretell a time when even the natural world praises God:

**7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.**

**8 Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy**

And this is what Isaac Watts was talking about when he wrote,

**Let fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy!**

D. And then finally, the end of Psalm 98 tells why all this joy is happening:

**The Lord, who comes to judge the earth—**

The Lord will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Isaac Watts saw this as a reference to the return of Jesus at the end of time when he comes to judge the earth

And this is what he was talking about when he wrote,

Joy to the world, the Lord is come

E. Now: Am I saying that this is not a Christmas song and you are no longer allowed to sing it at Christmas time?

-No, no, no – not at all.

1- LISTEN:

- Without the first coming, there would not be a second coming!
- Without the birth, there would not be the final victory

2- So it's entirely appropriate to sing this song at Christmas time

- But now you know “the rest of the story”

And I hope that from now on, when you sing this song, you'll remember the deeper meaning.