

# Joy to the World

Words by Isaac Watts, 1719; Music by Lowell Mason, 1830

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1. Joy to the world! The Lord is come.  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room;  
And heav'n and nature sing,  
And heav'n and nature sing.  
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns  
Let men their songs employ.  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat the sounding joy

3. No more let sin and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as the curse is found.

4. He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness.  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders, wonders of His love.

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A nonconformist pastor and prodigious author of theological and philosophical books (about 60) and hymns (about 700), Isaac Watts (1674-1748) is most remembered for the extraordinary hymns, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "Our God Our Help in Ages Past," and "Joy to the World!"

First published in Watts' 1719 work, *The Psalms of David*, imitated the language of the New Testament. Though the triumphant words "Joy to the world" exemplify the Christmas feeling, this familiar text is actually a translation based on five verses from Psalm 98.

Of all the sacred carols, "Joy" is perhaps the most positive and uplifting declaration of the message of Christmas. The exclamation point almost universally inserted by carol editors after the initial line, "Joy to the world!," powerfully punctuates the exhilarating effect that this carol has had for the past century and a half.

*Robert Joseph, The Christmas Book*

More than a century later after the words were written, in 1839, American composer and music educator Lowell Mason decided to set them to music modestly including the phrase "From George Frederick Handel," apparently to honor his idol, for he borrowed two musical phrases from Handel's *Messiah* ("Lift Up Your Head" and "Comfort Ye") and wove them into a joyful song for Christmas. For nearly 100 years, the world accepted this ascription, until musicologists pointed out that not a single phrase in the music can be said to have come straight from any work of Handel's.

In Luke 2:1-14, an angel appears to shepherds in the fields and says "Do not be afraid. I bring you **good news of great joy to all people...**"

With such fine sources as the Bible and "The Messiah", this carol has become a true classic, returning every season to bring more 'Joy to the World.'

*William C. Egan, The History of Carols*

~Devotion by Christine Lancaster, December 2011