

*Joy to the World - the Lord has come
Let earth receive her king*

This hymn, surely one of the most uplifting of all Christmas carols, was first published in 1719. It was composed by the famous and prolific hymn writer, Isaac Watts. Watts wrote over 600 hymns during his life. It was part of a hymn book of 150 new hymns of his own composition. All 150 hymns were paraphrases of the psalms in the spirit of the New Testament. This one is a hymn of praise to God as creator and Saviour. It is based upon Psalm 98 which includes the words...

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice and sing praise.

Watt's hymn is joyful in a profound, sober manner. The Christian's hope and joy is not based on merrymaking but on the sober reality of our human need and God's undeserved action in Jesus to help us. As his words make clear – "far as the curse is found" - the curse of human sin, and it is found everywhere, in everyone. But rather than deny this truth or to give up hope. "the Lord has come... and He has come to make his blessings flow" – "far as the curse is found." The babe of the Manger has come, has lived, died and rose again. At Christmas, as always, we sing God's praises for "The Saviour reigns" indeed!