

JOY TO THE WORLD

TEXT: PSALM 98:1-9

INTRODUCTION:

1. Isaac Watts was born in 1674, and he died in 1748. He was an English hymnwriter, theologian and logician. A prolific hymn writer, he wrote over 750 hymns, many of which are still very popular today such as, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" and "We're Marching to Zion."
2. However, his most famous hymn is "Joy to the World."
3. In his day, most people sang psalms in their worship services, and Isaac Watts did not think that the psalms that had been arranged for singing were very good, and so he set about trying to improve them.
4. One of the psalms he selected was Psalm 98, which has become one of the most popular of all Christmas carols. But interestingly neither the psalm nor the hymn are not talking about the birth of Christ.
5. Psalm 98 and "Joy to the World" are about the second coming of Christ, not the first coming.
6. Psalm 98 corresponds with Psalm 96 (cf. 96:1, 3, 10-13, etc.). There are also some similarities to the second book of the book of Isaiah.
7. For example, Isaiah 52:10 says, "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (cf. Psalm 98:2, 3).
8. Spurgeon said Psalm 98, "is a sort of *Coronation Hymn*, officially proclaiming the conquering Messiah as Monarch over the nations, with blast of trumpets, clapping of hands, and celebration of triumphs. It is a singularly bold and lively song" (*Treasury of David*).

I. UNIVERSAL SALVATION (98:1-5).

1. "All the ends of the earth" will see "the salvation of our God" when Christ returns (98:2, 3).
2. There is a great emphasis on the universality of "the salvation of our God" (98:3) -- "the heathen" (the Gentile nations, 98:2); "all the ends of the earth" (98:3); "all the earth" (98:4); "the world, and they that dwell therein" (98:7).
3. Isaiah 11:9 says that when our Lord returns, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."
4. Every pagan land will rejoice. The whole globe will be glad, the floods will clap their hands, and the hills will rejoice (98:4-8).

5. Israel, the nation that has rejected Christ, will repent and receive their King. Verse 3 says, "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel" (cf. Zech. 12:10; 13:1).

II. UNIVERSAL KINGDOM (98:6)

1. We see in verse 6 a public celebration with great rejoicing, similar to the coronation of kings. If worldly people do this for a mere earthly king, how much more should God's people rejoice when the King of kings and Lord of lords returns to establish His kingdom?
2. Spurgeon said, "On coronation days, and when beloved monarchs ride abroad, the people shout and the trumpets sound till the walls ring again. Shall men be more enthusiastic for their earthly princes than for the divine King? Is there no loyalty left among the subjects of the blessed and only Potentate? *King Jehovah* is his name; and there is none like it, have we no joyful noise for him?"
3. First Kings 1:40 says that when Solomon was crowned king of Israel, "the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them."
4. And the Lord Jesus said, "and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:42).
5. Note the words: "joyful" (98:4, 6, 8) and "rejoice" (98:4). Good music makes us joyful (98:4-6).
6. But it must be good music, not the devil's trash! "O sing unto the LORD a new song" (98:1). Not some worldly old song. I read something along these lines the other day. It was written by Warren Weirsbe:

"One of my seminary professors was a missionary in Africa for many years. When he first arrived on the field by riverboat, from the banks of the river he could hear screaming and wailing and the beating of drums. But 25 years later, when he went down to the river to leave the field, people lined the banks and were singing, 'All hail the power of Jesus' name, let angels prostrate fall.' What a difference!"

7. Not only will God's people praise the King of kings, but all nature is called upon to rejoice (98:7, 8). That is why Isaac Watts wrote, "And Heaven and nature sing..."
8. *Joy to the earth, 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, repeat, the sounding joy.*

III. UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT (98:9; 96:13)

1. Just as the Gospel brings universal salvation, those who reject the Gospel face a universal judgment -- " the earth...the world, and the people" (98:9).
2. Psalm 9:8 says, "And he shall judge the world in righteousness."
3. The apostle John said, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12). It will be a universal judgment.
4. The apostle Paul stood up on Mars Hill in Athens and preached, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).
5. Our Lord said that when He returns, He shall gather before him all nations, "and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:32).
6. God's law is good, His action right, and His justice fair. "With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity."

CONCLUSION:

I quoted Warren Weirsbe before. Let me continue with the quotation:

The Christian faith is a singing faith. Christians ought to be singing people. We are admonished in the Word of God to sing to the Lord. "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory" (v. 1).

Sing about God's victories. If you think you have no victory in your life, start singing about the victory of the Lord, and you'll be surprised what He'll do for you.

Sing about His salvation. "The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen" (v. 2). We should proclaim the message of salvation to people today.

Sing about His mercy and faithfulness. "He hath remembered His mercy and his truth" (v. 3). The Lord has been merciful to us, and His faithfulness endures to all generations.

Sing about His coming. Verse 9 tells us that the hills are rejoicing before the Lord, "for He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity." Sing about His coming, for Jesus may come back today!

Are you singing the praises of God in your life? If you've lost your song, it may mean that you've lost something else--your vision of God, faith in His Word -- or perhaps sin has come into your life. Follow the instructions of this psalm and "sing unto the LORD a new song."