

Joy to the World! The Lord is Come!

You may be surprised to learn that the hymn *Joy to the World* is not a Christmas song. That is right, in spite of this hymn being in hundreds of hymnals underneath the category of “Christmas,” Isaac Watts originally wrote this song in 1719 to be about the ‘second’ coming of Jesus.

If you look closely at the lyrics, *Joy to the World* is based upon a Bible passage that talks about the joy that the world will have when Jesus comes back a second time to make all things right (check out Psalm 98).

So, since this is the case, should we take our hymnals and tear *Joy to the World* out of the Christmas section? Should we rip it out of the beginning part of our hymnal and place it with those hymns about Jesus’ second coming? Or, should we start a crusade to ban all churches from singing this song during the time of Christmas? No, we need not be this intense. Singing *Joy to the World* during the Christmas season is very fitting, even though it is not technically a Christmas song.

When we sing *Joy to the World*, we remember that Christmas isn’t over. Even after we take down our Christmas trees and put our Christmas decorations away in boxes, Christmas continues. Sure, when Jesus was born, He fulfilled many promises and prophecies from the Old Testament; however, we must not forget that there are still many Christmas prophecies and promises that have yet to be fulfilled.

For example, in verse three of *Joy to the World*, we sing,

“No more let sins 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.”

Now, this third verse states that Jesus makes His blessings flow as far as the curse is found. And where is the curse found? It is found everywhere we look. All creation is under the effects of the curse. When you see death, there the curse is. When you see police cars, locked doors, passwords on your computers, PINs for ATM machines, and gates around houses, well... these are things that attempt to restrain the effects of the curse. Wars, rumours of wars, plagues, tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, and flooding? These are the effects of the curse, as well. The curse of sin has fallen upon all of humanity and all of creation, wreaking havoc on everyone and everything. And so, wherever we look, the curse is found.

However, with the first coming of Jesus, blessings flow as far as the curse is found. And what is that blessing? It is the blessing that the One who was born in Bethlehem and went to Jerusalem’s cross blesses you with the forgiveness of sins. When Christ died on that cross and rose from the grave, it was not just for a select few, but it was a blessing that flowed to everyone – as far as the curse is found.

Jesus came to that manger to go to your cross so that He would redeem you from the curse by becoming a curse for you.

And so, you and I have joy this Christmas Season because Jesus was born... to die... to forgive... you and me.

But remember that the hymn *Joy to the World* speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus. And so when we sing this hymn during Christmas, we are confessing that Christmas began long ago in Bethlehem and that Christmas isn’t over yet. It is true that Christ fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies by being born into time, space, and history, but many promises of Christmas have not yet been fulfilled. We shall have more promises fulfilled when we receive our King Jesus when He comes a second time again.

And when He comes a second time, blessings will flow again “as far as the curse is found.”

When Jesus comes a second time, everything that the curse has corrupted in this life – from coast to coast, from north to south pole, and down to the smallest of molecules – will be reversed. In Christ’s Second Coming – a second Christmas - there will be a new creation. No more thorns and thistles in the ground. No more disease and dying in your bodies. No more fear and shame in your mind. No more curse, for the blessing, power, and might of Christ will reverse the curse!

So today, we sing *Joy to the World*, with joy not only because Christ came that Christmas long ago, but we know full well that Christ will come again! We sing with joy because, in Jesus’ First Coming, the blessing of forgiveness flows as far as the curse is found. We sing with joy because, in Jesus’ Second Coming, the blessing of a new creation will flow as far as the curse is found.

Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Joy to the world, the Lord will come.