**JOY TO THE WORLD**

Sunday School Lesson 11

*Lessons from the Hymnbook*

Psalm 98

12/18/2022

**Introduction:** Last week, we looked at the Christmas hymn “Who Is He in Yonder Stall?” We observed the ten individual couplets that make up the song. These ten couplets highlight ten different events that sum up the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. The song spans from the shepherds worshipping Him at His birth to the Lord Jesus sitting on His throne at the right hand of the Father. For this week’s lesson, we are going to be looking at another Christmas hymn – “Joy to the World.” This hymn might be the most popular Christmas hymn sung today. It certainly is the most published Christmas hymn, as it appears in roughly 1,400 different hymnals. The song was written in 1719 by famous preacher and hymn writer Isaac Watts. He wrote the hymn specifically with Psalm 98 in mind, so we will reference that psalm throughout our study this morning. As with last week’s hymn, this song was not meant to be just a Christmas hymn. In studying Psalm 98, we see that this psalm references both the first and second coming of Christ. Some might even argue that the focus is more on the second coming than the first. Regardless of this, the song is a great Christmas song for the believer because it reminds us of the joy that is associated with both comings of Christ. The music to the song is attributed to George Handel. While Handel did not have any direct involvement with this happening, a Boston music educator named Lowell Mason set the hymn in 1836 to a tune that he regarded as being from Handel.

1. **THE LORD’S COMING BRINGS JOY TO BOTH HEAVEN AND EARTH.**
2. **There is great rejoicing in Heaven over the coming of the Lord (Psalm 96:11; 1 Chronicles 16:31; Isaiah 44:23; 49:13; Matthew 2:2-10; Luke 2:9-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 12:12; 18:20).** We covered the excitement of Heaven over Christ’s birth in Bethlehem during our study of the hymn “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” We saw very clearly how the angels rejoiced over the Lord’s arrival. Undoubtedly, all of the Heavenly host rejoiced on that blessed day in Bethlehem. They understood what it meant for all of God’s creation. We know that Heaven has a particular interest in the welfare of the earth. We find this by the Scripture telling us that Heaven rejoices over one sinner that repents. Additionally, we see that heavens in the Bible may also be speaking of what we call “outer space.” The heavens certainly rejoiced at Christ’s coming by shining the bright light of the Star of Bethlehem for all to see. When Christ comes again, the stars will first fall from the heavens. Of course, at the second coming of Christ, all of the Heavenly host will be rejoicing and cheering on the King. I believe that the book of Revelation shows us that there is great anticipation even now as Heaven awaits this special moment.
3. **There is great rejoicing by the earth over the coming of the Lord (Psalm 66:4; 96:11; 98:4, 7-8; 1 Chronicles 16:23, 33; Isaiah 14:7; 44:23; 49:13; Luke 19:40; Revelation 5:13).** This is a predominant theme of Psalm 98. The whole earth rejoices over the coming of the Lord. We are not speaking yet about mankind; though the first two stanzas of the song intertwine the joy of the earth and the joy of man. For now, we are looking at only the rejoicing of the earth itself. Jesus told the Pharisees in Luke 19:40 that if His disciples had not given Him praise, then the stones would immediately cry out. We can see the joy of the earth in Christ’s first coming by the way in which the earth responded to the Lord. He calmed the seas and the wind. Psalm 98 shows us the sea roaring for the Lord. The floods also clap their hands. “Let the hills be joyful together.” All of nature is moved by the arrival of the Lord. Look at the book of Revelation, and you can see how the earth will behave leading up to the second coming of Christ. It is sad to think that the earth is more in tune with the Lord’s coming than mankind. Winds and see obeyed Him, but man rejected Him.
4. **THE LORD’S COMING BRINGS JOY TO MANKIND.**
5. **The Lord’s first coming brings joy to mankind because it makes known His salvation (Psalm 98:2-3; Isaiah 62:11; Luke 1:77; Acts 28:28).** I believe that Psalm 98 definitely speaks to both the first and second coming of Christ because of what we find in verse 2 and 3. The Bible speaks of the Lord making known His salvation. That was fulfilled with the first coming of Christ. He has openly showed His righteousness in the sight of the heathen. This speaks to the Gospel being made known to all nations: not just revealing His mercy and truth to Israel (vs. 3). The book of Luke speaks to the Lord revealing His salvation through His coming. As we celebrate Christmas, may we pray that the unsaved of the earth will prepare Him a room in their heart.
6. **The Lord’s second coming brings joy to mankind because the Saviour will reign (Psalm 96:10; 97:1; 98:9; 146:10; Luke 1:33; Revelation 11:17; 19:6;22:5).** “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” That’s the song of the great multitude. As we have noted many times before, the nation of Israel was most excited about the first coming of Christ because of their desire for Him to reign. The truth reveals to us, though, that they truly were not desirous for the Lord to reign over them because of their own wickedness. Certainly, the same will be true at the second coming of Christ for many on this earth. Mankind will tremble at His coming because it will represent His reign over them and their judgment. Yet, for all those who have put their faith in the Lord, His second coming will be a time of unmeasurable joy. It will be the full realization of our salvation. Can you even imagine the joy that you will experience when you hear that trumpet sound? It will be unlike anything you have ever experienced before. To make it even better, the Bible tells us that we will get to rule and reign with Christ. What a wonderful time that will be! Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
7. **THE LORD’S COMING RESTORES THE JOY THAT SIN HAS TAKEN FROM THE EARTH.**
8. **The Lord’s first coming brought victory over the curse of mankind (Genesis 3; Daniel 9:11; Matthew 25:41; Romans 6:9; 8:15-21; Galatians 3:13; Revelation 1:18).** Sin does not produce joy. The Bible tells us that it may give pleasure for a season, but the end of it is death. That’s the curse that man is under. We are under the curse of death. The Lord promised Adam and Eve that disobeying Him would bring death. Since that time, every one of us, except the perfect Jesus Christ, was bound to the curse. Christ willing came and died to break the curse of sin. There is great joy for the person who realizes that they no longer have to stay bound under this curse. We are free, yes, free indeed! The Lord Jesus wants us to know that He is the One holding the keys to death, Hell, and the grave. While we are still subject to physical death, we know that death no more reigns over us. It does not have the final say. We are not going to be subjected unto it forever. We are free from it now, and we will experience the full release from it when Christ finishes it off!
9. **The Lord’s second coming will bring a total end to the curse of mankind (Revelation 21:4; 22:1-3).** The curse is broken now, but it will eventually be done away it completely. Are there any more comforting verses in Scripture than the one’s that speak to there being no more death. Every person who is born in this world is faced with the reality of their finite existence in this physical body. Life is but a vapor. It is gone so quickly. Mankind strives against their appointment with death, and death continues to win every single time. As mentioned in the previous point, the believer does not have to fear death as the world fears death, but there is still something unsettling about having to experience death. This is why every believer from the time of Christ until now would have preferred for Christ to return during their lifetime. We don’t know if that will happen for us, but we do have confidence that eventually death will be totally destroyed – never seen again!
10. **THE LORD’S COMING RESTORES THE JOY THAT COMES FROM BEING WITH HIM.**
11. **The Lord’s coming includes all of the goodness of His truth, grace, and righteousness (Psalm 98:9; Jeremiah 12:1; John 1:14-17; 1 John 2:1).** We live in a day where it is easy to get frustrated because of the lack of truth. It’s hard to know what really is true today. We also live in a day where there is a great absence of grace from one person to another. Mankind seems to rarely show favor and goodness to each other. Lastly in that group, we see in our day where so many things are wrong. It seems like the world is upside down. Everything is backwards. Mankind frequently calls good evil and evil good. Knowing all of this, it ought to give us great joy to think about what is included with Christ’s coming. We will get to experience his truth, grace, and righteousness. Can you imagine a world where no one will ever lie to you? How about one where everything is done perfectly? That’s what we have to look forward to when Christ comes. His disciples got a glimpse of it during His earthly ministry. They saw such goodness as they followed Christ.
12. **The Lord’s coming includes all of the joy that comes from experiencing His love (John 17:23; Romans 8:35-39; 1 John 4:10).** Most of all, Christ’s coming is joyful because we get to experience His love. The disciples were able to walk with Jesus every day and experience His love. Imagine even the love that Mary experienced in having the only begotten Son of God as her child! Being with Christ is going to be so wonderful because of how much He loves us. He has the perfect place prepared for us. That’s what He left to do. As we look forward to His coming, let’s rejoice in the great love that He has already shown us. There is nothing that can separate us from His love. It was His love that led Him to being willing to die Himself on the cross of Calvary. We see His love in His Word and His Spirit, but when He comes, we will see its fullness.