

## Glory to God in the Lowest

Isaac Watts was a genius. At age 4 he had learned Latin, at age 9 Greek, at age 11 French, and at age 13 Hebrew. A precocious child, he was a natural poet and had the odd habit of conversing entirely in rhyme, driving his parents to the point of distraction.

Once, when his father demanded to know why he had his eyes open during prayers, he replied: "A little mouse for want of stairs, ran up a rope to say its prayers." And when he received corporal punishment for his impudence, he cried out: "O father, do some pity take, and I will no more verses make!"

As Isaac grew, he devoted his odd little gift to the service of God. That's why when you open any hymnal in the English-speaking world today you will nearly always find one of his 600 hymns: **AT THE CROSS**

Unfortunately for Isaac, the man who had such a great love for beauty in the world around him was not movie star material.

His one chance at love came and went with a young lady named Elizabeth Singer, who actually fell in love with Watts sight-unseen through his published poems. She was so taken with this man who could write so deeply and passionately that she threw caution to the wind, defied convention, and asked him to marry her in a letter.

But when they finally met, Elizabeth retracted her offer on the spot. She later wrote in her journal that Isaac Watts was "... only five feet tall, with a shallow face, hooked nose, prominent cheek bones, small eyes, and deathlike color. I admired the jewel but not the casket that contained it."

Elizabeth Singer missed the chance to marry the Father of English Hymnody, and the man some call the most influential of his generation.

Isaac Watts was personal friends with many of the driving forces behind the great awakening in the 18th century – Jonathan Edwards, John & Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield. Benjamin Franklin published a book of Watt's hymns, and the great preacher Charles Spurgeon grew up committing his poetry to memory.

Isaac was heartbroken at this rejection and never married, but he spent his single life focused on the glory of God. It was in 1719 that he published his poetic work based on Psalm 98 that would go on to become his best-known hymn and one of the world's favorite Christmas carols: **JOY TO THE WORLD**

**Luke 2:8-14** <sup>8</sup> And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, <sup>14</sup> Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

**1 Corinthians 1:26-31** <sup>26</sup> For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: <sup>27</sup> But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup> And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: <sup>29</sup> That no flesh should glory in his presence. <sup>30</sup> But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: <sup>31</sup> That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Satan had a choice to serve God and refused; he is jealous of mankind's choice and wants to insure that we refuse! His conflict with God and His people recklessly rampages through man's history from the beginning in the Garden of Eden. Satan was successful in leading Adam and Eve into sin, but God intervened in a redemptive act and spoke this promise:

**Genesis 3:15** And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

From that very moment, Satan began working feverishly on his plans to launch a preemptive strike against God by aborting the line through which the man-child was to come. He wanted to stop the people of God and the plan of redemption at all costs!

- He filled Cain with enough hatred to murder his righteous brother Abel. God raised up Seth.
- He led mankind into enough wickedness that God destroyed the world in a flood. God raised up Noah.
- He deceived men with false religions that worshipped the gods of nature. God raised up Abraham.

- He caused Pharaoh to issue a death warrant for all Hebrew baby boys. God thwarted his plan through Pharaoh's own daughter ... and the opportune tears of a baby named Moses.
- He tempted Israel into lustful orgies before a golden calf. God raised up the sons of Levi.
- He bribed the prophet Balaam to curse the nation of Israel. God took control of Balaam's tongue.
- He frightened the spies with the giants of the land of Canaan. God raised up Joshua and Caleb.
- He tried to starve out the nation through the raids of the Midianites. God raised up Gideon.
- He bound the strongman Samson with cords of lust that he could not break, and handed him over to the Philistines to rot in a prison. God gave Samson his greatest victory when he repented in his lowest moment.
- He polluted the priesthood of Israel through the wickedness of Eli's sons. God raised up Samuel.
- He snared King Saul with the sin of pride. God raised up a man after his own heart named David.
- He caused Queen Athaliah to kill of the royal seed. God used Jehoiada the priest to hide little Joash.
- He helped Haman hatch his plot of genocide against the Jews. God raised up Queen Esther.

Satan polluted the lineage of the Messiah with so much wickedness that finally God cursed King Jeconiah and all his descendants. Jeconiah was the last king in David's line. He was succeeded not by his son, but by his uncle Zedekiah. Zedekiah was blinded and led to Babylon in chains, and his reign marked the end of Judah as a kingdom. Satan thought "the curse of Coniah" would forever put an end to the plan of redemption but God had a higher purpose!

**Jeremiah 22:28-30** Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

**Matthew 1:11** And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:

But Jesus, as the **legal** but not the **literal** son of Joseph, was a miraculous answer to this riddle of the rabbis. As both God and man, He was the only one who could have possibly filled the role of the Messiah!

**Galatians 4:4-5** But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

So many times in history God's "chain of promise" seems to depend on only one very fragile link! However, God delights in having a people who serve him simply because of their choice and obedience to His Word! He receives glory from our obedience in front of Satan, who refused his chance to obey! At no time in history was the "link" more fragile than at the Incarnation! God in human form - a baby! Look how far Jesus came:

- He traded the robes of eternity for rags which wrapped His tiny body.
- His golden throne room was abandoned in favor of a dirty sheep pen which reeked of dung.
- Divinity entered the world in a stable, through the womb of a teenager and in the presence of a carpenter.
- The angels who worshipped him in Heaven were replaced with kind but bewildered shepherds.

SHEPHERDS?! The Pharisees of that time said that there were six professions that were unworthy – one of those was shepherding. A shepherd was not permitted to give testimony in a court of law. A shepherd was not allowed to enter a synagogue, because the requirements of his job kept him ritually unclean. Shepherds were usually just young boys, like David.

There was at least one occasion in Israel's history when shepherding was assigned as a punishment for sin, and shepherding was considered an abomination to the nations around them (Genesis 46:34). People simply had no dealings with them – BUT GOD DID!

Jesus didn't have to come! He had a choice. Had he chosen to stay in Heaven, who would have known? Who would have blamed him? He could have come back as a man in another era, when crosses were out of style! But his heart wouldn't let him! Divinity heard the voices of hopelessness and despair from mankind - from you!

Why did he come as a human being anyway? So people could come to him! There is never a hint in Scripture of one person who was afraid to draw near Jesus. There were those who mocked him, those who were envious of him, those who misunderstood him, and those who revered him. But there was not one person who considered him too holy, too divine, or too celestial to touch. There was not one person who was reluctant to approach him for fear of being rejected.

The only "weak link" in God's chain of redemption today is the link called "CHOICE." God has already chosen YOU, but He allows you – a humble, frail human being – to accept or reject HIM. **Glory to God in the lowest!**