

Isaac Watts - Hymn writer & Theologian

(July 17, 1674 - November 25, 1748)

Published by Adv. John Joseph Nalloor



www.hymntime.com

Isaac Watts was born in Southampton on July 17, 1674, as the eldest of nine children of a minister, also named Isaac Watts. The father was a leading Dissenter (a member of a religious body in England or Wales who has, for one reason or another, separated from the Established Church) in Southampton, a clothier, and a deacon at Above Bar Congregational Church, and later in life maintained a boarding school.

The elder Watts spent time in prison for being a non-conformist, and was in prison at the time of his son's birth. The younger Watts is considered the "father of English hymnody". As a youth, he criticized the language of the psalms that were sung in church. Isaac Watts is credited with writing over 600 hymns.

He was educated at the Free School, Southampton, where he studied Greek, Latin, French and Hebrew from the Reverend John Pinhorne, rector of All Saints. In 1690, he entered the Nonconformist Academy of Thomas Rowe at Stoke Newington, near London (dissenters were not permitted to attend universities by the Church of England).

After leaving the Academy at the age of 20, he spent two years at his father's home where he wrote a majority of the Hymns and Spiritual Songs (published 1707-9). In 1696, he became tutor for six years of the family of Sir John Hartopp at Stoke Newington. In 1699 he became assistant to Dr. Isaac Chauncey at Mark Lane Independent Chapel, London. He undertook serious study (so serious that it permanently damaged his health) and was ordained and succeeded Dr. Chauncey as minister in 1702.

The congregation grew rapidly under Watts' leadership and was forced to move twice and call an assistant minister. He suffered a serious illness in 1712 and stayed at Theobalds, near Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, with the Sir Thomas Abney family.

Watts was sick for four years, but he remained with the Abney family the rest of his life. He was tutor to the Abney children and chaplain to the household. In 1739 he suffered a serious stroke which left him paralyzed. Watts died on November 25, 1748, and was buried in Bunhill Fields.

The following Hymns in the Mar Thoma Church hymn book "Kristteeya Keerththaangal" are written by Issac Watts:

Hymn No 419 (332) *O God our help in ages past (Inneyolham Thunachone)*

Hymn No 150 (141) *When I survey the wondrous Cross (Mahathwa Prabhu Marichcha)*

Hymn No 311 *Jeus shall reign (Aathithiyan Uthicheedunna)*

