

## Joyful Praise.

### Intro.

As a child on a summer's day, I watched a chrysalis I'd kept in a matchbox, split open. Through a very small gap, a crinkled butterfly slowly emerged, & gradually extended its wings in the warm sunshine. After a pause, no longer restricted by the cocoon, it was free, & flew away. It seems it needed the constriction of that small opening to force fluid from its body into its wings. Similarly, in childbirth a baby needs the constriction of the birth canal for healthy lungs. But what joy that newborn baby brings to its mother after hours of pain.

This year has brought pain & tough times to many. Perhaps we can look at other tough times in the Bible of births which brought joy.

Gen.1. Takes us back to the beginning in darkness & nothingness.

God the Father with Jesus the Son thro` the Holy Spirit, created our wonderful world for His pleasure. The angels rejoiced & sang praises at this birth of the universe.

Gen. 21, tells us of Abraham at 100 & Sarah at 90, who both laughed at news of her confinement, so God named the baby, Laughter, Isaac. He gave his parents great joy after years of endurance in trusting God's promise of blessing to the world through this son's family.

Exodus is the story of Moses & the birth of the nation of Israel. After their deliverance from slavery & their escape across the Red Sea, they sang the joyful victory song of Moses & Miriam sang & led the women in a tambourine dance.

1 Samuel 1. The next joyful birth after years of insult & mental anguish, came to Hannah, mother of Samuel. She loved God so much, in gratitude she gave Him young Samuel, & joyfully sang a song of praise, which Mary echoed a1000 years later. Samuel anointed David king of Israel.

Psalms. God loved & blessed David with musical gifts – he went through difficult times before he was crowned, & wrote of sorrow & joy in praise. He sang, played various instruments, organised choirs & worship, & danced for joy before the Lord.

Isaiah, & many prophets, foretold of the joy to come upon Israel's release from exile, to a rebirth of the nation in their homeland. They would mount up to Jerusalem with joyful praise after years of hardship & separation.

Luke. 400 long years later, tells of the joy of all the earth as foretold by Isaiah, the amazing birth that changed the world, of Jesus, the fantastic Rescuer. Our God in human flesh caused angels to impact heaven & earth with their joyful praise. Their exultation infected startled night watchmen who sped joyfully to check out this news of a Messiah in a manger. They gave joy to the parents, & they spread their joy to everyone in the town under Roman occupation.

Gospels. During His life ministry, we see Jesus giving joy to all those who suffered. His joy was when people thanked Him & praised God. Born to die, He went through agony & excruciating pain & shame to His death on the cross on our behalf. His joy was to obey His Father.

But hey! What joy when He became alive again, a new birth – a new kingdom with the King of kings reigning! Allelujah!

Revelation. The last book, after cosmic physical & spiritual battles, is full of joyful praise from the whole creation in heaven & on earth. Jesus is victorious & celebrates with a wonderful joyful party for all who are invited.

## **To Conclude.**

Jesus` brother James ( 1,2) wrote: consider it pure joy, brothers & sisters, whenever you face trials testing your faith; it leads to perseverance & maturity.

A year ago today, 27 December, was Paul`s last day at home. 2020 has certainly been a strange year. For him, like the butterfly, it was a release from bodily constriction to a new life of freedom in glory.

This year, we all have known restrictions, & many have suffered loss of jobs & loved ones. In Isaiah 61,3 the Anointed Servant promises returning exiles the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise as they rebuild their lives.

How have we been rebuilding?

- 1.The birth of vaccines gives hope after the arduous perseverance of scientists.
2. We`ve seen loving our neighbours in action, thanks to the birth of the Hub, as volunteers reach out to those in need.
- 3.New ways have developed to communicate through the internet – zoom : teaching at all levels, trading, governing, worshipping, reaching family members, etc.
- 4.Best of all, God`s kingdom has been spreading outside the church`s walls, both in Britain & fantastically overseas to people hungry for good news.
- 5.Jesus Himself is the good news, the true source of deep joy.

When you turn to Jesus & receive Him into your life by faith, the angels in heaven rejoice at your spiritual birth. Joy is an expression of exulting love, a fruit of the Spirit.

Here is a suggestion for a New Year resolution, today`s NT reading from 1 Thess.5:

Rejoice always, pray non-stop, & give thanks in all circumstances, both good & bad, for this is the will of God in Messiah Jesus.

May the joy of Jesus bless you in a Happy New Year.

**Amen.**

## **Let`s Pray.**

Thank you, Heavenly Father for loving us so much that at Christmas, His birthday, You sent us Your fantastic precious Son, Our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ with heaven`s joyful praise.

Strengthen us with Your Holy Spirit to fulfil Your will in rejoicing, praying & giving thanks.

Please give us grace to pass on your loving kindness with joy to others so that they will want to know you too.

We ask in Jesus` precious Name.

**Amen.**

