

## **Christ the Lord Is Risen Today**

By Maggie Moller

*“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”*

(I Corinthians 15:51-52)

With the theme this month being “Resurrection,” I chose to write on a hymn most would say is an “Easter hymn.” Easter is the special day when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. However, as Christians, shouldn’t every day be Easter? Our lives should be lived as one continual celebration of Christ’s sacrifice and His triumph over the grave! I am ashamed to admit how many days I do not live as a reflection of celebrating what my Lord has done for me. The Lord has recently been reminding me how our lives are a continual journey towards being transformed more into the likeness of Christ. It can be discouraging if we focus on the here and now with our sinful hearts and the constant struggle of sacrificing our will to the will of the Father. But if we look at the final result, Christ’s promise to return for us and take us to be with Him for eternity, we can persevere through all the trials and tests! In the end it will all be but a faint memory in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ!!

### The Lyricist – Charles Wesley

Charles Wesley was born in Epworth, England, on December 18, 1707. He was the 18<sup>th</sup> of 19 children born to Samuel and Susannah Wesley. Sadly, only 9 of his siblings lived to adulthood.

Charles had a rough entrance into the world. He was born prematurely and his parents thought he would not live. Miraculously, after spending many weeks barely alive, he began to grow and thrive. Clearly, God had a plan for the life of this little baby boy. His father, Samuel Wesley, was a minister as well as a poet. His mother was also a scholar. She taught her children Greek, Latin, and French as their primary education.

After completing his mother’s early training, Charles was sent to a private school where he studied more of the classics. He finished his education with a master’s degree from Oxford University. At Oxford, Charles and a group of friends started a Bible study group they called the “Holy Club.” Due to the club’s strict religious observations and devotion to the Scripture, other students began calling them the “Methodists” because of their methodical way of studying the Bible.

After obtaining his education, Charles followed in the footsteps of his father and elder brother John into a life of ministry. He was ordained in 1735 when he was 28 years old. He is often overlooked in the spotlight of his older brother, John, who is known as being the founder of the Methodist denomination. However, it was Charles who gave the new denomination its hymns. Through all his hymns Charles focused on writing lyrics that taught the same messages John spoke from the pulpit: messages on the Holy Spirit, God’s love, and Christ’s sacrifice.

In 1749, when Charles was 42 years old, he married Sarah Gwynne. Sarah, who was also known as Sally, was 19 years his junior. Despite their extreme difference in age, their marriage was very happy. Throughout their marriage, Sally always accompanied Charles on his evangelism journeys with his brother John. The couple had 8 children together; however, only 3

lived to adulthood. Both of their sons, Charles Junior and Samuel, inherited their father's love for music. They were proficient organists at an early age and both pursued a career in music. Charles Junior served as the personal organist for the English Royal family of the day. Samuel became one of the most acclaimed musicians of his time and was nicknamed the "English Mozart."

Throughout his life, Charles Wesley is attributed with writing over 6,000 hymns. One source has credited him with writing as many as 8,989 hymns. It is not certain exactly when "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" was written. It was written as a variation of a 14<sup>th</sup> century Latin hymn "Jesus Christ is Risen Today." Charles Wesley simply added his own lyrics to this hymn's musical score. Many of his hymns are very familiar to us, such as, "And Can It Be That I Should Gain?", "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus", "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing", and "O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing." Charles Wesley passed away on March 29, 1788, in London, England, at the age of 80 years old. Despite the many trials he faced in his life, Charles Wesley was fully devoted to his Lord and Savior. He knew he could withstand all the difficulties of this life because of his hope in the One to come! We too can stand firm because we know Christ has risen and has defeated the grave for all eternity!!

Resources:

- 1) Wikipedia "Charles Wesley" and "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"
- 2) <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/poets/charleswesley.html>