

*Hymns for the Year 1756*¹

[Baker list, #214]

Editorial Introduction:

On November 1, 1755, Lisbon, Portugal was hit by a devastating earthquake, estimated as high as 9.0 on the Richter scale. Each of the three main shocks was followed by a *tsunami*, adding the destructive impact of flooding. The damage was widespread, reaching as far south as Morocco. It took over two weeks for details of the quake to reach England. When they did, in keeping with the common spirituality of the day, most viewed it as a sign of God's anger against human sin. For Charles Wesley's more apocalyptic reading, see "Hymn on the Lisbon Earthquake" (1756).

The response of George II to the Lisbon earthquake was to proclaim February 6, 1756 as a general fast day. The primary purpose stated for the fast was to show contrition and repentance, imploring God's mercy, in hopes of diverting the apparent looming punishment. But tensions were also building again between Britain and France. Indeed, England had just concluded a pact with Prussia in anticipation of hostilities (and would declare war on France in May 1756). Thus, the king also instructed his people to pray for God's help in diverting the need for war and in strengthening the troops in case the war should come.

Echoing his set of hymns on the Jacobite rebellion a decade earlier ("Hymns for 1745"), in January 1756 Charles Wesley published a set of seventeen hymns designed "particularly for the fast day." The opening hymn reflects clearly the immediate situation of the Lisbon earthquake. Subsequent hymns shift focus more to the continuing struggles with France (the "sons of Rome"), and were likely composed over the last decade. In particular, the six hymns on the fourth chapter of Jeremiah are most likely a republication of *Hymns from Jeremiah* (1745). None of the other hymns had been published prior to this collection.

The hints of apocalypticism that began to surface in "Hymns for 1745" carry over into this collection, providing a map of the growth of this theme toward its zenith in "Hymn on the Lisbon Earthquake" (1756) and "Additional Hymns for 1756."

After its initial use in 1756, Wesley republished the collection at least once for another fast day. The 4th edition (1780), published with the revised title *Hymns for the Fast Day*, was released for the public fast called by King George III on February 4, 1780 to seek God's merciful protection of the military forces engaged in the conflict with the colonies in North America.

Editions:

[Charles Wesley.] *Hymns for the Year 1756; Particularly for the Fast-Day, February 6*. Bristol: Farley, 1756.

Dublin: Powell, 1756

2nd Bristol: Farley, nd. (dropping last half of title)

4th London: Hawes, 1780 (title: *Hymns for the Fast Day*)

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**HYMNS
FOR THE
YEAR 1756.**

Hymn 1.

- 1 Merciful God, Almighty King,
 To thee with trembling hearts we turn,
 To thee our last distress we bring,
 And prostrate at thy footstool mourn:

- 2 Our own, our nation's sins confess,
 Which justly all thy plagues demand,
 The weight of public wickedness,
 That sinks to hell our guilty land.

- 3 Yet hath thy kind compassion spared
The objects of thy righteous ire,
While all thy threatened woes we dared,
And mocked that everlasting fire;
- 4 While more obdurate still, thy word
Of proffered mercy we withstood,
Denied our all-redeeming Lord,
And trampled on our bleeding God.
- 5 Ev'n then thou didst our guardian stand,
Our help in danger's blackest hour,
Nor let the sword go through our land,
Nor let the yawning earth devour.
- 6 By heavenly indignation struck,
The conscious earth began to reel,
Beneath our load of guilt it shook;
Again it trembled; and was still.
- 7 The earthquake turned its fatal course,
Through distant realms the judgment spread,
And armed with heaven's resistless force
In ruinous heaps whole cities laid.
- 8 O might we by their downfall rise,
Thy sudden chastisements t' avert,
Present thy grateful sacrifice,
The broken, poor, obedient heart.
- 9 O might we all our sins forsake,
The imminent destruction shun,
Before thy heaviest judgments shake
Our land, and turn it upside down:
- 10 Before thou all thy wrath reveal,
With Sodom and Gomorrah's hire
Reward, and leave thy foes to feel
The vengeance of eternal fire.

Hymn 2.

- 1 In our most precarious state,
 In this dark vindictive hour,
Shuddering on the brink of fate,
 Lest the greedy pit devour,
From the wrath of earth and sky
Where shall we for refuge fly?
- 2 Lo! Our all at stake we see,
 All we prize or love below,
Peace, and life, and liberty,
 Trifles to our sorest woe,
Still we bear an heavier load,
Trembling for the ark of God.
- 3 Trembling for religion's cause,
 Lest it share the common doom,
(Pure and undefiled it was,
 Purged from all the dregs of Rome)
Lest the genuine gospel fail,
Lest the gates of hell prevail.
- 4 Bowed beneath the deepest sense
 Of our state, we fain would pray,
O might general penitence
 Now prevent the evil day,
All these low'ring storms divert,
Heaven engage to take our part!
- 5 Sovereign Majesty of heaven,
 God most merciful, most high,
Who thy fav'rite Son hast given
 For a rebel world to die,
Pity on thy rebels take,
Spare our land for Jesu's sake.

- 6 If thou must in wrath reprove,
 Father, make not a full end,
Visit us in pard'ning love,
 Then thy pardoned church defend,
Then let Israel's God arise,
Scattering all his enemies.
- 7 Far away the aliens chase,
 Save the land belov'd by thee,
Bless us, as in ancient days:
 Peace, and true prosperity,
Gospel-righteousness restore,
Faith, and life for evermore.

Hymn 3.

- 1 Being benign, whose name is love,
 Whose nature, always to forgive,
Thine anger with our sins remove,
 And bid thy humbled rebels live.
- 2 Thy lifted hand, restrained by prayer,
 Hath often waved the threatened blow:
Still thy *unnat'ral act* forbear,
 And all thy ancient mercies show.
- 3 When most displeased thou shak'st the rod,
 And absolute thy threat'nings sound,
A kind reserve is understood,
 A secret clause for mercy found.
- 4 Yet forty days, thy justice cries,
 And Nineveh shall be o'erthrown,
Except (thy whispering grace replies)
 They turn, before the wrath comes down.

- 5 How often hath thy goodness tried
A people hardened from thy fear,
And turned th' impending plague aside,
And spared our land from year to year?
- 6 Ev'n now thou dost the stroke suspend,
Thy pitiful reluctance show,
And watchmen through our Israel send,
To warn us of the falling blow.
- 7 What canst thou more for sinners do?
And if we farther still rebel,
If still our sinful lusts pursue,
We court the hottest flames of hell.
- 8 The men of Nineveh shall rise
Our judges in that vengeful day,
Unless we quit the paths of vice,
And cast our loathsome sins away.
- 9 Less dreadful will the punishment
Of Sodom and Gomorrah prove,
Than ours, if scorning to repent,
We still despise thy bleeding love.

Hymn 4.
Ezekiel 9.

Part 1.

- 1 Great God, whose wrath in ancient times
O'erflowed thy sinful people's crimes;
Whose angry voice again I hear,
Which thundered in Ezekiel's ear;
Stir up thy mercy with thy power,
And arm us for the fiery hour.

- 2 If now the dreadful charge is given
To the fierce ministers of heaven,
If ready now the aliens stand,
Their slaughter weapons in their hand,
To deal the chastisements of God,
And make our land a field of blood:
- 3 Come *with* them, O thou man in white,
Who dost in gracious acts delight,
Before the dire destroyers come,
In love prevent the general doom;
Nor make thy wrath on sinners known,
'Till mercy hath secured thine own.
- 4 Our sad devoted land go through,
Distinguishing the mournful few,
Whose spirits vexed with pious pain,
Lament our sins of deepest stain,
And groan the public guilt to bear,
And agonize in secret prayer.
- 5 The men, who daily sigh and grieve,
The Lots that in our Sodom live,
A difference in their favour make,
Into thy kind protection take,
And claim the pensive souls for thine,
And mark them with the crimson sign.
- 6 The sign which men and demons flee,
Let *us* ev'n now receive from thee;
Inscribe us, O thou pard'ning God,
Write our protection in thy blood,
(That blood which every ill averts)
And stamp thine image on our hearts.

Hymn 5.
[Ezekiel 9.]

Part 2.

- 1 Tremendous God of Israel, hear,
Before the slaughtering troops draw near,
Before they at thy house begin;
To smite the hoary slaves of sin;
Revoke the charge, the wicked spare,
And give them to thy people's prayer.
- 2 With timely sorrow we confess
Our land's abounding wickedness,
Our sins that to a deluge rise,
And dare the vengeance of the skies,
Where sinners fancy thee to reign,
Regardless of the works of men.
- 3 "The earth he hath long since forsook,
Nor deigns on worms to cast a look;
Left to ourselves (they madly cry)
We joy or grieve, we live or die,
And floods may rise, and cities fall,
For chance, and nature governs all."
- 4 Canst thou forgive the impious crowd,
Whose actions say, There is no God?
Or must thou all thy fury pour,
And let the sword thy foes devour,
The plague destroy, the dearth consume,
Or gaping earth at once entomb?
- 5 We know not Lord, thy dread decree,
For secret things belong to thee,
Whether thou wilt again reprieve,
Or now the final sentence give;

But till thy counsel thou display,
We still for mercy, mercy pray.

- 6 Call in the ruthless sons of Rome,
Nor let the threatened earthquake come:
We hear the rod, we mourn and sigh,
We with the weeping remnant cry,
“Revoke the charge, the wicked spare,
And give them to thy people’s prayer.”

Hymn 6.
[Ezekiel 9.]

Part 3.

- 1 Stay, thou departing Spirit stay,
Nor take thy presence quite away!
Though now our *languid* hearts bemoan
Thy glory to the threshold gone,
Yet do not, Lord, withdraw thy light,
Or leave us to eternal night.
- 2 Arise into thy resting place,
As in those wondrous ancient days,
When God *appeared* to dwell with men,
Betwixt the mystic cherubs seen,
Worshiped by all the angel choir,
And symbolized by living fire.
- 3 Now to thy drooping church return,
Thou Comforter of all that mourn,
Thy suppliant in thy temple meet,
And bless us from thy mercy-seat,
And still in our assemblies shine,
The dazzling Shechinah divine.
- 4 The tokens of thy presence show,
And guard us from th’ invading foe;

Thy glory be our sure defence,
Our buckler, thy omnipotence,
Nor ever from thine house remove,
When filled with all the life of love.

Hymn 7.
The Fourth Chapter of Jeremiah.

Part 1.

- 1 O Israel hear the warning word,
Accept the power to weep and mourn,
Return to thy inviting Lord,
If yet thou wilt, he saith, return.
- 2 By timely grief the woe prevent,
Nor weary out my patient love,
If now thou wilt at last repent,
Thou never, never shalt remove.
- 3 'Stablished in truth and righteousness,
The Lord thou for thine own shalt claim:
The nations too themselves shall bless
In him, and boast of Jesu's name.
- 4 For thus the Lord vouchsafes to speak,
Sinners, my latest call obey,
Break up your fallow ground, and seek
My face, and cast your sins away.
- 5 Choke not the seed of heavenly love,
From worldly cares and pleasures free,
The foreskin of your hearts remove,
And give up all your souls to me.

- 6 Repent, before my vengeful ire
For all your evil deeds ye feel,
Before my wrath break out as fire,
And burn with flames unquenchable.

Hymn 8.
[The Fourth Chapter of Jeremiah.]

Part 2.

- 1 Throughout Jerusalem declare,
In Judah's land proclaim the woe,
Sound an alarm of instant war,
And point them to th' invading foe.
- 2 Blow ye the trumpet's loudest blast,
Let all the crowd with horror cry,
"Fly to the forts, with trembling haste,
Before the swift pursuer fly."
- 3 The standard Sion-ward set up,
Ye people all in time retreat,
Fly from the sword, nor dare to stop,
Where war hath fixed its bloody seat.
- 4 For I the just, the jealous God,
Will call an evil from the north,
Scatter my dreadful plagues abroad,
And send the swift destruction forth.
- 5 The lion from his brake is come,
The waster fierce is on his way,
The powers of persecuting Rome
Are all gone forth² to kill and slay.
- 6 Th' invader comes with furious haste,
The scourge of heaven's avenging Lord,
To lay thy land, and cities waste,
And plant *his* faith with fire and sword.

²Ori., "Are gone forth"; corrected in 2nd edn. and following.

- 7 For this ye sinners howl and cry,
Your broken hearts and voices join,
With sackcloth girt, in ashes lie,
And groan to bear the wrath divine.
- 8 The wrath divine doth fiercely burn,
Doth still on all our souls abide,
Nor will he from his anger turn,
Nor will our God be pacified.
- 9 Horror shall every heart assail,
And sore distress, and huge dismay,
Prophets and priests and kings shall fail
Astonished in that dreadful day.

Hymn 9.
[The Fourth Chapter of Jeremiah.]

Part 3.

- 1 O God, thou hast deceived our hope,
Our surest hope of lasting peace,
Hast given thy wretched people up,
And scourged us for our wickedness;
Abandoned to the slaughtering sword,
We bear the fury of the Lord.
- 2 My furious wrath they still shall know:
And lo! A mighty scattering wind
Shall from *the barren mountains* blow,
And sweep to hell the faithless kind,
Their lives I will no more reprieve,
But now the final sentence give.
- 3 The spoiler as a cloud shall rise,
The whole devoted land o'erspread:
His chariot as a whirlwind flies,
His horses match the eagle's speed;

Alas for us! Shall Sion say,
To all our foes an helpless prey!

- 4 O Sion, wash thy heart from sin,
So shalt thou my salvation see:
How long shall evil lodge within
The temple that belongs to me?
Thy vain designs and thoughts remove,
T' admit the God of pard'ning love.
- 5 For lo! A voice with awful sound
Declares the scourge and judgment near,
Go, call the hostile nations round,
Before Jerusalem t' appear,
Summon from far th' embattled powers,
To shout against her trembling towers.
- 6 Her watchful foe shall keep her in,
And close besiege on every side,
Chastise the rebels for their sin:
Because thou hast my wrath defied,
Refused to tremble at my frown,
And forced my ling'ring judgments down.
- 7 Thy doings have procured the woe,
And pulled it on thy guilty head:
The fatal cause with horror know,
Thy sin in thy chastisement read,
Feel in the bitter, penal smart,
The evil of the life and heart.

Hymn 10.

[The Fourth Chapter of Jeremiah.]

Part 4.

- 1 My bowels yearn with deep distress,
My heart is pained, and mourns within,
My soul laments, and cannot cease,
Alarmed by war's perpetual din,

My soul forestalls the general wound,
And dies to hear the trumpet's sound.

- 2 Destruction is the dreadful cry!
Destruction from the Lord is come!
The land is spoiled, the people fly,
And flying meet their sudden doom,
My tents are spoiled, my curtains torn,
And I my country's ruin mourn.
- 3 How long shall I the standard see,
And hear the trumpet's martial blast?
'Till Israel hear, and turn to me,
The Lord hath said, my wrath shall last,
The whole devoted land devour;
And all its storms of vengeance pour.
- 4 For O! My people have not known,
My ways they have not understood,
Averse from me, to evil prone,
Expert in sin, but rude in good,
Foolish and sottish children they,
Who will not learn their God t' obey.

Hymn 11.
[The Fourth Chapter of Jeremiah.]

Part 5.

- 1 I saw the earth by sin destroyed,
And lo! It lay wrapped up in night,
A chaos without form, and void,
And robbed of all its heavenly light.
- 2 I saw, and lo! The mountains shook,
The hills moved lightly to and fro,
The birds had all the sky forsook,
Nor man, nor beast appeared below.

- 3 I saw, and lo! The fruitful place
Was to a ghastly desert turned,
Beneath Jehovah's frowning face
The ghastly desert drooped, and mourned.
- 4 The nation suddenly o'erthrown
I saw before the waster's sword:
The cities all were broken down
In presence of their angry Lord.
- 5 For thus their angry Lord hath spoke,
The land shall soon be all laid waste:
Yet will I to the remnant look,
And spare the weeping few at last.
- 6 I will not utterly consume,
Or make a full destructive end,
But change my des'late people's doom,
And every humble³ soul befriend.

Hymn 12.
[The Fourth Chapter of Jeremiah.]

Part 6.

- 1 Yet first the stricken earth shall mourn,
And deepest night obscure the skies,
I will not from my purpose turn,
Resolved my rebels to chastise.
- 2 My rebels shall with panic dread,
Before the furious horsemen fly,
Climb the steep rocks with desperate speed,
Or panting in the thickets lie.
- 3 The cities shall be all forsook:
Ah! Sion, whither wilt thou go,
To whom for help or rescue look,
When ravaged by th' invading foe?

³“Humble” changed to “humbled” in 2nd edn. and following.

- 4 Adorn thee with thy richest dress,
With gems and gold their heart⁴ to gain,
Colour with nicest art thy face,
And strive to please, but all in vain.
- 5 Thy beauty cannot take their eyes,
Or turn thy lovers' wrath away;
Thy lovers shall thy charms despise,
And seek, whom they abhor, to slay.
- 6 For I have heard a voice of woes,
And shrill complaints that pierce the skies,
Loud as a woman in her throes,
Sion's afflicted daughter cries.
- 7 Weary to death, she spreads her hands,
And wails her loss, and speaks her pain,
"Ah! Woe is me, the ruffian bands
Have all my hapless children slain!"

Hymn 13.

- 1 Almighty Lord of hosts,
On whose protecting grace,
Thy quiet flock securely trusts
In troublous evil days;
Who hear'st the faithful prayer,
Incline thine ear to ours,
And guard us from the coming snare
With all thy heavenly powers.
- 2 For us thy guardian hand
Hath oft extended been,
When Babel's sons approached the land,
Thy mercy stepped between;
Thy mercy caught us up
As from our instant doom,
And frustrated the surest hope
Of antichristian Rome.

⁴"Heart" changed to "hearts" in 2nd edn. and following.

- 3 Thou, Lord, against our foes
 Didst for thy people fight,
Their dark conspiracies disclose,
 And blast their open might,
 Their *consecrated* hosts,
 Their fleets *invincible*,
And baffle the triumphant boasts,
 And subtlest plots of hell.
- 4 Ev'n now thy piercing eye
 The close design surveys,
Of men, who Israel's God defy,
 A false perfidious race,
 Who treacherously contend
 Our country to o'erthrow,
And watch the dreadful news to send
 In the destructive blow.
- 5 With furious error blind,
 With wild ambition's lust,
They reign, corrupters of mankind,
 And murderers of the just,
 Drunk with the martyrs' blood,
 They all thy laws disdain,
And boldly cry, "There is no God,
 Or none who died for man."
- 6 Such is the nation, Lord,
 Who on our necks would tread!
Ah! Do not use them as thy sword,
 Nor let their plots succeed:
 But cast the wicked down,
 Confound their angry pride,
And make the scattered aliens own,
 That God is on our side.

Hymn 14.

- 1 Ye servants of God,
 Acknowledge him near:
Who bought you with blood,
 Shall quickly appear:
In love's latest season,
 Ye sinners awake,
For Jesus is risen
 The kingdoms to shake.

- 2 His justice or grace
 Ye shortly shall prove,
For these be the days
 Of vengeance—and love.
The great tribulation
 Ev'n now is begun:
The hour of temptation,
 And rescue is one.

- 3 Redemption is come,
 Jehovah descends,
His haters to doom,
 And honour his friends.
The world he is waking
 From sinful repose:
In battles of shaking,
 He fights with his foes.

- 4 Fire, vapour, and storm
 Accomplish his word,
And earthquakes perform
 The charge of their Lord:
The pride of the nations
 He terribly spurns,
Earth's steadfast foundations,
 And cities o'erturns.

- 5 Outstretching his hand
 O'er mountains and seas,
He shakes the dry land,
 And wat'ry abyss!
A marvellous motion
 Through nature is spread,
And *peaceable* ocean
 Starts out of his bed!
- 6 Like thunder confined
 In caverns, he roars,
And raised without wind
 Looks down on the shores,
Hangs horribly over
 The children of woe,
Expanded to cover
 Their cities *below*.
- 7 But Jesus's throne
 Immovable stands,
The elements own
 Almighty commands;
The ruin of nature
 Doth awfully bring
Her second Creator,
 Her absolute King.
- 8 Come Saviour arrayed
 With glory and power,
The world thou hast made,
 Destroy, and restore,
That all the new heaven
 And earth may proclaim,
"The kingdom is given
 To Jesus the Lamb."

Hymn 15.

- 1 Righteous God, whose vengeful vials
All our fears and thoughts exceed,
Big with woes and fiery trials,
Hanging, bursting o'er our head:
While thou visitest the nations,
Thy selected people spare,
Arm our cautioned souls with patience,
Fill our humble⁵ hearts with prayer.

- 2 If thy dreadful controversy
With all flesh is now begun,
In thy wrath remember mercy,
Mercy first and last be shown:
Plead thy cause with sword and fire,
Shake us, 'till the curse remove,
'Till thou com'st the world's desire,
Conquering all with sov'reign love.

- 3 By the signals of thy coming,
Soon, we know, thou wilt appear,
Evil with thy breath consuming,
Setting up thy kingdom here:
Thy last heavenly revelation
These tremendous plagues fore-run,
Judgment ushers in salvation,
Seats thee on thy glorious throne.

- 4 Earth unhinged as from her basis,
Owns her great restorer nigh:
Plunged in complicate distresses,
Poor distracted sinners cry:
Men their instant doom deploring,
Faint beneath their fearful load;
Ocean working, rising, roaring,
Claps his hands, to meet his God.

⁵“Humble” changed to “humbled” in 2nd edn. and following.

- 5 Every fresh alarming token
More confirms thy faithful word,
Nature (for its Lord hath spoken)
Must be suddenly restored:
From this national confusion,
From this ruined earth and skies,
See the times of restitution,
See the new creation rise!
- 6 Vanish then the world of shadows,
Pass the former things away,
Lord, appear, appear to glad us
With the dawn of endless day:
O conclude this mortal story,
Throw this universe aside,
Come, eternal King of Glory,
Now descend, and take thy bride.

Hymn 16.

- 1 Stand th' omnipotent decree,
Jehovah's will be done!
Nature's end we wait to see,
And hear her final groan:
Let this earth dissolve, and blend
In death the wicked and the just,
Let those pond'rous orbs descend,
And grind us into dust.
- 2 Rests secure the righteous man,
At his Redeemer's beck
Sure t' emerge, and rise again
And mount above the wreck,
Lo! The heavenly spirit towers,
Like flames, o'er nature's funeral pyre,
Triumphs in immortal powers,
And claps his wings of fire.

- 3 Nothing hath the just to lose
 By worlds on worlds destroyed:
 Far beneath his feet he views
 With smiles the flaming void:
 Sees this universe renewed,
The grand millennial reign begun,
 Shouts with all the sons of God
 Around th' eternal throne.
- 4 Resting in this glorious hope
 To be at last restored,
 Yield we now our bodies up
 To earthquake, plague, or sword;
 List'ning for the call divine,
The latest trumpet of the seven,
 Soon our soul and dust shall join,
 And both fly up to heaven.

Hymn 17.⁶

- 1 How happy are the little flock,
 Who safe beneath their guardian rock
 In all commotions rest!
 When wars and tumult's waves run high,
 Unmoved above the storm they lie,
 They lodge in Jesu's breast.
- 2 Such happiness, O Lord, have we,
 By mercy gathered into thee,
 Before the floods descend:
 And while the bursting cloud comes down,
 We mark the vengeful day begun,
 And calmly wait the end.
- 3 The plague, and dearth, and din of war
 Our Saviour's swift approach declare,

⁶A shorter manuscript precursor appears in Charles Wesley's letter to his wife, December 22, 1755.

And bid our hearts arise:
Earth's basis shook confirms our hope,
Its cities' fall but lifts us up,
To meet thee in the skies.

- 4 Thy tokens we with joy confess,
The war proclaims the Prince of Peace,
The earthquake speaks thy power,
The famine all thy fulness brings,
The plague presents thy healing wings,
And nature's final hour.
- 5 Whatever ill the world befall,
A pledge of endless good we call,
A sign of Jesus near:
His chariot will not long delay:
We hear the rumbling wheels, and pray
Triumphant Lord, appear.
- 6 Appear with clouds on Sion's hill,
Thy word and mystery to fulfil,
Thy confessors t' approve,
Thy members on thy throne to place,
And stamp thy name on every face,
In glorious heavenly love.