

BWV 43 - Gott fährt auf mit Jauchzen/God goes up with jubilation (Cantata for Ascension Day)

Erster Teil

1. Chor

Gott fährt auf mit Jauchzen und der Herr mit heller Posaunen. Lobsinget, lobsinget Gott, lobsinget, lobsinget unserm Könige.

2. Rezitativ T

Es will der Höchste sich ein Siegsgepräng bereiten,
Da die Gefängnisse er selbst gefangen führt.
Wer jauchzt ihm zu? Wer ists, der die Posaunen rührt?
Wer gehet ihm zur Seiten?
Ist es nicht Gottes Heer,
Das seines Namens Ehr,
Heil, Preis, Reich, Kraft und Macht
mit lauter Stimme singet
Und ihm nun ewiglich ein Halleluja bringet.

3. Arie T

Ja tausend mal tausend begleiten den Wagen,
Dem König der Kön'ge lobsingend zu sagen,
Daß Erde und Himmel sich unter ihm schmiegt
Und was er bezwungen, nun gänzlich erliegt.

4. Rezitativ S

Und der Herr, nachdem er mit ihnen geredet hatte,
ward er aufgehoben gen Himmel und sitzt zur rechten
Hand Gottes.

5. Arie S

Mein Jesus hat nunmehr
Das Heilandwerk vollendet
Und nimmt die Wiederkehr
Zu dem, der ihn gesendet.
Er schließt der Erde Lauf,
Ihr Himmel, öffnet euch
Und nehmt ihn wieder auf!

Zweiter Teil

6. Rezitativ B

Es kommt der Helden Held,
Des Satans Fürst und Schrecken,
Der selbst den Tod gefällt,
Getilgt der Sünden Flecken,
Zerstreut der Feinde Hauf;
Ihr Kräfte, eilt herbei
Und holt den Sieger auf.

7. Arie B

Er ists, der ganz allein
Die Kelter hat getreten
Voll Schmerzen, Qual und Pein,
Verlorne zu erretten
Durch einen teuren Kauf.
Ihr Thronen, mühet euch
Und setzt ihm Kränze auf!

Part One

1. Chorus

God is gone up with jubilation and the Lord with bright trumpets. Sing praise, sing praise to God; sing praise, sing praise to our King.

2. Recitative T

The Highest Himself prepares a victory parade, He leads captivity itself as His captive. Who acclaims Him? Who is it that stirs the trumpets? Who walks by His side? Is it not the host of God, Who sing His name's honor, salvation, praise, kingdom, power and strength with loud voices sing and now to Him an eternal Allelujah bring.

3. Aria T

Yes, thousand & thousands attend the chariots, singing their praises to the King of Kings, that earth and heaven bow down beneath Him & what He has conquered fully succumbs.

4. Recitative S

And the Lord, after He had spoken with them, was lifted up into heaven and sits at the right hand of God.

5. Aria S

My Jesus has now completed His work of salvation and makes His return to Him who had sent Him. He finishes His earthly journey: You heavens, open and take Him back again!

Part Two

6. Recitative B, str, c

The hero of heroes comes, Satan's prince and terror, who Himself felled death, blotted out the stains of sin, destroyed the horde of enemies: You Powers, come quickly and hand up the victor!

7. Aria B, tr or vl, c

It is He, who quite alone has trodden the winepress full of anguish, torment and pain, to save the lost ones at a costly price: You Thrones, stir yourselves, and place garlands upon Him!

Psalms 47:5–6 Old Testament prophecy of Christ's ascension

Psalms 68:18 Thou didst ascend the high mount, leading captives in thy train... Old Testament parallel with Christ leading sinners and sin itself

Psalms 68:17 The chariots of God are many thousands upon thousand. Old Testament parallel of Christ conquering death

Mark 16:19 (Gospel for Ascension Day)

Verse 1 of anonymous strophic poem: The Faithful perceive that Christ's work on earth is complete.

Verse 2 of poem: The Faithful see that Christ's work entailed the defeat of Satan

Verse 3 of poem: The Faithful perceive the cost of Christ's work.

Is 63.2 "I have trodden the wine press alone" — God's vengeance transformed into Christ's salvation work

8. Rezitativ A

Der Vater hat ihm ja
Ein ewig Reich bestimmt:
Nun ist die Stunde nah,
Da er die Krone nimmet
Vor tausend Ungemach.
Ich stehe hier am Weg
Und schau ihm freudig nach.

9. Arie A

Ich sehe schon im Geist,
Wie er zu Gottes Rechten
Auf seine Feinde schmeißt,
Zu helfen seinen Knechten
Aus Jammer, Not und Schmach.
Ich stehe hier am Weg
Und schau ihm sehnlich nach.

10. Rezitativ S

Er will mir neben sich
Die Wohnung zubereiten,
Damit ich ewiglich
Ihm stehe an der Seiten,
Befreit von Weh und Ach!
Ich stehe hier am Weg
Und ruf ihm dankbar nach.

11. Chorale

Du Lebensfürst, Herr Jesu Christ,
Der du bist aufgenommen
Gen Himmel, da dein Vater ist
Und die Gemein der Frommen,
Wie soll ich deinen großen Sieg,
Den du durch einen schweren Krieg
Erworben hast, recht preisen
Und dir g'nug Ehr erweisen?

Zieh uns dir nach, so laufen wir,
Gib uns des Glaubens Flügel!
Hilf, daß wir fliehen weit von hier
Auf Israelis Hügel!
Mein Gott! wenn fahr ich doch dahin,
Woselbst ich ewig fröhlich bin?
Wenn werd ich vor dir stehen,
Dein Angesicht zu sehen?

Composite translation

8. Recitative A

The Father has indeed
ordained for Him an eternal Kingdom:
Now the hour is at hand
when He receives the crown
for enduring a thousand adversities.
I stand here at the wayside
and gaze after Him joyfully.

9 Aria A

I see already in spirit,
how at God's right hand
he dashes His enemies to pieces,
to help His servants
out of distress, need, and dishonor:
I stand here at the wayside
and gaze after Him longingly.

10. Recitative S

He will prepare for me
a mansion next to Him,
that I may eternally
stand by His side,
freed from grief and woe!
I stand here at the wayside
and call after Him gratefully.

11. Chorale

O Prince of Life, Lord Jesus Christ,
who has been taken up
to heaven, where Your Father is
with the company of the righteous,
how shall I rightly praise Your great
victory
that You, through a difficult battle
have won,
and show You sufficient honor?

Draw us after You, then we will run,
give us the wings of faith!
Help us to flee far from here
upon Israel's mountain!
My God! When shall I journey there,
where I myself will be forever happy?
When will I stand before You,
beholding Your face?

Verse 4 of poem: The
Faithful perceive that
Christ's crown was won
through adversity.

Verse 5 of poem: The
Faithful see that Christ's
work continues from
heaven.

Verse 6 of poem: The
Faithful are assured that
Christ will prepare a
dwelling for them.

Chorale text, verses 1 and
13 from Johannes Rist's
Ascension hymn, *Du
Lebensfürst, Herr Jesu
Christ* (1641) set to
Johannes Schop Christmas
melody *Ermuntre dich,
mein schwacher Geist*
(also 1641)

Within the Church, the
Faithful first ask Christ
how to celebrate the
victory and then pray for
their reunion in heaven.

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BWV 43 is one of four settings that Bach wrote for Ascension Day and part of his third cycle of cantatas; it was first performed on May 30, 1726. The anonymous libretto begins with Psalm 47 (5 *God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises*), making a parallel between the Old Testament God's victory over nations and Christ's victory over sin. Two references to Psalm 68 (17 *The chariots of God are twenty thousand.... 18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive....*) continue the parallel between God's territorial victory and Christ's eternal victory. The key passage of Mark 16, the Gospel for the day (19 *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God*), completes the dicta, and the remainder of the libretto is an anonymous strophic poem that conveys the human view of Christ's journey on earth and ascension to Heaven. The text of the closing chorale is from Johann Rist's Ascension hymn, *Du Lebensfürst, Herr Jesu Christ* (1641).

Part I

1. The opening chorus is a joyful celebration with fanfares for trumpets and voices, and a powerful fugue that moves through the fanfares. In the fugal development, Bach modulates through dissonant harmonies to a series of descending fifths and a grand cadence on the dominant. A homophonic dance follows, and movement closes with dance, fugue, and fanfares integrated into a triumphal ending.
2. The recitative for tenor and continuo converts the Old Testament image of God leading captives into Christ leading sinners; Bach sets the names for God and Christ—"honor, salvation, praise, kingdom, power and strength"—to a fanfare similar to those of the first movement.
3. The aria for tenor and strings extends the joyful mood of the first movement with fanfare motifs, but scored for violins instead of the earlier trumpets.
4. The soprano-continuo recitative presents the key verse of the Gospel for the day.
5. The final aria in Part I, a stately dance for soprano, oboes and strings, is the opening verse of the poem. A two-part theme introduced by first violins and first oboe conveys Christ's journey on earth with turning descents and twisting ascents. When the soprano takes up the theme, she sings the directly first part of the theme and a counterpoint to the theme for the second part.

Part II

6. Bach sets verse 2 of the poem to a bass recitative surrounded by fanfares (again scored for strings) and 16th notes repetitions that dramatize Christ's victory over Satan and death.
7. Verse 3, an aria for bass, trumpet, and continuo, introduces the real message of Christ's work on earth: the salvation of sinners. The central image of Christ trampling the winepress transforms Old Testament vengeance (*Is 63:3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury*) into the New Testament metaphor of Christ trampling out the sins of humans. The energetic 3-voice counterpoint moves briskly until an abrupt shift (measure 22) that sets stark 8th-note chromatic lines as Bach conveys the contents of the grapes: "suffering, torment, and pain"—of both sinners and Christ himself on the cross. The energetic motion returns, but the brief moment revealing the cost of salvation casts a shadow over the exuberance.
8. Verse 4, a recitative for alto and continuo, is a human retelling of the Mark gospel. Bach sets the "thousand hardships" to a descending broken triad, recasting the triumphant "thousands of chariots" of Movement 3 into the tribulations of Christ on earth. At the end, an ascending melisma emphasizes not Christ's ascent but the gaze of the witness following the ascent.
9. Verse 5, an aria for alto, oboes moving in parallel thirds and sixths, and continuo, is a dancelike recounting of the human view of Christ at the right hand of God. From heaven, Christ continues to smite his enemies, but Bach does not dramatize this except for two bars of dissonances in the oboes through which the alto ascends with 16th notes to the highest note (e'') of the aria. Bach

saves his drama for the “wretchedness, distress and humiliation,” which the alto sings to a twisting chromatic line, first with the oboes playing in canon, and then, with the oboes silent and the continuo in a complimentary twisting chromatic passage. In the closing section, the oboes return to their parallel dance theme but break off each time the alto sings of gazing longingly toward heaven; the rising phrase inverts the earlier chromatic descent, thus transforming “wretchedness” into a yearning for the life hereafter.

10. Verse 6, a soprano-continuo recitative, is a statement of Christian faith. The message that Christ frees sinners from “Woe and Ach!” echoes the previous movement’s chromatics but with graceful sighing appoggiaturas.
11. The cantata closes with the first and 13th verses of Johann Rist’s Ascension Hymn set to Johann Schopp’s *Ermuntre dich, mein Schwachen Geist*. This melody was familiar to 18th century Lutherans as a Christmas hymn, and so Bach reminds the Faithful that Christ’s triumphant Ascension into heaven began with his humble and human birth.

Tonal Structure

This cantata is one of Bach’s very few that opens in one key and closes in another. I think that Bach intends this gradual movement from C major to G major as a metaphor for the Faithful who trust that they will eventually leave this earth to join Christ in heaven but only after a journey of ups and downs. For the first three movements—pure celebration, with no reminder of what went before the celebration—the cantata moves brightly through fairly conventional harmonies. After the Gospel for the day, the poem—the voice of both a witness to the Ascension and one of the 18th century Faithful—moves toward the increasing awareness of the cost of salvation, and Bach conveys this through increasingly complex harmonies.

So the first chorus (#1) and first aria (#3) are written in major keys (C and G) with conventional harmonies that cadence on tonic, dominant and tonic. In the first verse of the poem (#5), Bach uses the one-sharp signature as in the previous aria, but the key is E minor and the tone more melancholic than joyful. After the sermon, Part II takes us back to the key of C major for the accompanied recitative (#6) and the first aria (#7). The texts of these verses identify the work of Christ on earth as defeating sin and saving humans, and Bach emphasizes both the joy of the victory (by modulating into D major) and, in the aria, the agony of the battle by modulating into deep flats (C minor). Bach sets the second aria of Part II (#9) in A minor and the parallel oboes give it the air of a dance. In the B section, however, Bach modulates into E_b major to dramatize the reason for the struggle (“to help his servants out of distress...”) that led to the ultimate victory. This is the turning point of the cantata. The final recitative moves from D major (IV of the previous A minor) to E minor (iii of the following G major). With the chorale, the faithful stand within the structure of the church to ask for guidance and to pray.

Part I

ASCENT				
Old Testament as metaphor for New Testament events			New Testament	Strophic poem v 1
##			Mid-cadence (D+)	Mid-cadence (B-)
#	Mid-cadence (G+)		3. Aria (G+)	5. Aria (E-)
♩	1. Chorus (C+)	2. Recit (A- >G+)		

Part II

DESCENT			ASCENT		
Strophic poem, v 2-6: Human witness to the Ascension and view of Christ’s work on earth					Church
##	Mid-cadence (D+)	Mid-cadence (D+)			
#				Mid-cadence (E-)	11. Chorale (G+)
♩	6. Recit (C+)	7. Aria (C+)	8. Recit (E>A-)	9. Aria (A-)	10. Recit (D >E)
bbb		Chromatic passage (C-)		Chromatic passage (E _b +)	