

J S BACH: CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

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Cantata I

BWV 248I **Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf, preiset die Tage** (Weihnachts-Oratorium I)

Christmas Day.

Poet unknown (Picander?); PT (Leipzig, 1734); Facs: Neumann T, p. 448.

2. Lk. 2:1 and 3-6; 5. Paul Gerhardt, verse 1 of "Wie soll ich dich empfangen," 1653 (Fischer-Tümpel, III, #401); 6. Lk. 2:7; 7. Martin Luther, verse 6 of "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ," 1524 (Wackernagel, III, #9), with interpolated recitative; 9. Martin Luther, verse 13 of "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her," 1535 (Wackernagel, III, #39).

25 December 1734, Leipzig; Parody: 1, 8 <--- BWV 214/1, 7; 4<--- BWV 213/9.

BG 5, 2; NBA II/6.

Christmas Oratorio I

1. Chorus (S, A, T, B)

Triumph, rejoicing, rise, praising these days now,
Tell ye what this day the Highest hath done!
Fear now abandon and banish complaining,
Join, filled with triumph and gladness, our song!

Serve ye the Highest in glorious chorus,
Let us the name of our ruler now honor!

2. Recit. (T) Evangelist

It occurred, however, at the time that a decree from the Emperor Augustus went out that all the world should be enrolled. And everyone then went forth to be enrolled, each person unto his own city. And then as well went up Joseph from Galilee from the city of Nazareth into the land of Judea to David's city which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and of the lineage of David to be enrolled there with

Mary, who was betrothed to be his wife, and she was pregnant. And while they were in that place, there came the time for her to be delivered.

3. Recit. (A)

Now is my dearest bridegroom rare,
Now is the prince of David's stem
As earth's redeeming comfort
Here born in time amongst us.
Now will shine bright the star of Jacob,
Its beam e'en now breaks forth.
Rise, Zion, and abandon now thy weeping,
Thy fortune soars aloft.

4. Aria (A)

Prepare thyself, Zion, with tender affection,
The fairest, the dearest soon midst thee to see!

Thy cheeks' beauty
Must today shine much more brightly,
Hasten, the bridegroom to love with deep passion.

5. Chorale (S, A, T, B)

How shall I then receive thee
And how thy presence find?
Desire of ev'ry nation,
O glory of my soul!
O Jesus, Jesus,
Set out for me thy torch,
That all that brings thee pleasure
By me be clearly known.

6. Recit. (T) Evangelist

And she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him within a manger, for they had no other room in the inn for them.

7. Chorale (S) and Recit. (B)

He is to earth now come so poor,

Who will the love then rightly praise
Which this our Savior for us keeps?
That he us his mercy show

Yea, is there one who understandeth
How he by mankind's woe is moved?

And in heaven make us rich

The Most High's Son comes in the world
Whose health to him so dear is held,
And to his own dear angels like.

So will he as a man himself be born now.
Kyrieleis!

8. Aria (B)

Mighty Lord, O strongest sovereign,
Dearest Savior, O how little
Heedest thou all earthly pomp!

He who all the world doth keep,
All its pomp and grace hath fashioned,
Must within the hard crib slumber.

9. Chorale (S, A, T, B)

Ah my beloved Jesus-child,
Make here thy bed, clean, soft and mild
For rest within my heart's own shrine,
That I no more fail to be thine!

Cantata II

BWV 248II **Und es waren Hirten in derselben Gegend** (Weihnachts-Oratorium II)

Second Day of Christmas (St. Stephen).

Poet unknown (Picander?); PT (Leipzig, 1734); Facs: Neumann T, p. 450.

2 (11). Lk. 2:8-9; 3 (12). Johann Rist, verse 9 of "Ermuntre dich, mein schwacher Geist," 1641 (Fischer-Tümpel, II, #184); 4 (13). Lk. 2:10-11; 7 (16). Lk. 2:12; 8 (17). Paul Gerhardt, verse 8 of "Schaut, schaut, was ist für Wunder dar," 1667 (Fischer-Tümpel, III, #485); 11 (20) and 12 (21). Lk. 2:13-14; 14 (23). Paul Gerhardt, verse 2 of "Wir singen dir, Immanuel," 1656 (Fischer-Tümpel, III, #403).

26 December 1734, Leipzig; Parody: 6 (15) <--- BWV 214/5; 10 (19) <--- BWV 213/3.

BG 5, 2; NBA II/6.

Christmas Oratorio II

1 (10). Sinfonia

2 (11). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And there were shepherds in that very region in the field nearby their sheepfolds, who kept their watch by night over their flocks. And see now, the angel of the Lord came before them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.

3 (12). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

Break forth, O beauteous morning light,
And bring day to the heavens!
Thou shepherd folk, be not afraid,
For thee the angel telleth
That this the helpless little boy
Shall be our comfort and our joy,
Here for to conquer Satan
And peace at last to bring us!

4 (13). Recit. (T, S) Evangelist, Angel

(Evangelist)

And the angel spake unto them:

(Angel)

Be not afraid, see now, I proclaim to you news of great gladness, which all the nations of the world will learn. For to you today is the Savior born, who is Christ, the Lord, in the city of David.

5 (14). Recit. (B)

What God to Abraham did promise,
This hath he to the shepherd choir
Revealed and proven.
A shepherd all this once before
Of God to learn was destined;
And now as well a shepherd must
The deed of yore he promised us
Be first to see completed.

6 (15). Aria (T)

Joyful shepherds, haste, ah hasten,
Ere ye here too long should tarry,
Haste, the gracious child to visit!
Go, your gladness is too fair,

Seek his grace's inspiration,
Go and comfort heart and spirit.

7 (16). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And let this be your sign: ye will discover the babe in swaddling clothes there
wrapped and in a manger lying.

8 (17). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

Look there, he lies in manger drear
Whose power reacheth ev'rywhere!
Where fodder once the ox did seek,
There resteth now the Virgin's child.

9 (18). Recit. (B)

So go then there, ye shepherds, go,
That ye this wonder see:
And when ye find the Highest's Son
Within an austere manger lying,
Then sing to him beside his cradle
In tones that sweetly ring
And with assembled choir
This song of slumber bring!

10 (19). Aria (A)

Sleep now, my dearest, enjoy now thy rest,
Wake on the morrow to flourish in splendor!

Lighten thy breast,
With joy be thou blest,
Where we hold our heart's great pleasure!

11 (20). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And suddenly there was with the angel the multitude of the host of heaven, there
praising God and saying:

12 (21). Chorus (S, A, T, B) Choir of Angels

Glory to God in the highest and peace on the earth now and to mankind a sign of
favor.

13 (22). Recit. (B)

'Tis meet, ye angels, sing and triumph,
That we today have gained such fortune!

Up then! We'll join our voice to yours,
We can as well as ye rejoice.

14 (23). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

We sing to thee amidst thy host
With all our strength, laud, fame and praise,
That thou, O long desired guest,
Art come into this world at last.

Cantata III

BWV 248III Herrscher des Himmels, erhöre das Lallen (Weihnachts-Oratorium III)

Third Day of Christmas (St. John, Apostle and Evangelist).

Poet unknown (Picander?); PT (Leipzig, 1734); Facs: Neumann T, p. 451.

2-3 (25-26). Lk. 2:15; 5 (28). Martin Luther, verse 7 of "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ," 1524 (Wackernagel, III, #9); 7 (30). Lk. 2:16-19; 10 (33). Paul Gerhardt, verse 15 of "Fröhlich soll mein Herze springen," 1653 (Fischer-Tümpel, III, #405); 11 (34). Lk. 2:20; 12 (25). Christoph Runge, verse 4 of "Laßt Furcht und Pein," 1653 (Fischer-Tümpel, III, #514).

27 December 1734, Leipzig; Parody: 1 (24) <--- BWV 214/9; 6 (29) <--- BWV 213/11.

BG 5, 2; NBA II/6.

Christmas Oratorio III

1 (24). Chorus (S, A, T, B)

Ruler of heaven, give ear to our stammer,
Let these our weary refrains bring thee pleasure,
As thee thy Zion with psalms doth exalt!
Hear thou our hearts, though, exultant with praises,
As we to thee here our homage now render,
For our salvation stands strong and secure!

2 (25). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And when the angel went away from them up to heaven, said the shepherds one to another:

3 (26). Chorus (S, A, T, B) The Shepherds

"Let us now go quickly to Bethlehem and this event now witness which hath here taken place, that which the Lord made known to us."

4 (27). Recit. (B)

He brought his people hope,
He hath his Israel redeemed,
His help from Zion he hath sent us
And all our suff'ring ended.
See, shepherds, this thing hath he done;
Go, this thing go and see!

5 (28). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

This hath he all for us brought forth,
His great love to manifest;
Rejoice thus all Christianity
And thank him in eternity.
Kyrieleis![\(1\)](#)

6 (29). Aria (S, B)

Lord, thy mercy, thy forgiveness,
Comforts us and sets us free.

Thy most gracious love and favor,
Thy most wonderful affection
Here make thy paternal faith
New again.

7 (30). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And they went forth quickly and found there both Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they, however, had ceased their looking, they spread forth the saying which had been told unto them concerning this child. And all to whom it came wondered at the story which had been reported to them by the shepherds. But Mary kept to herself then all these sayings, and she pondered them within her heart.

8 (31). Aria (A)

Keep thou, my heart now, this most blessed wonder
Fast within thy faith alway!

And let this wonder, these godly achievements,
Ever as comfort
Of thy feeble faith abide!

9 (32). Recit. (A)

Oh yes, my heart shall ever cherish
All it at this most gracious time
To its eternal bliss
With certain signs of proof hath witnessed.

10 (33). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

I will thee steadfastly cherish,
For thy sake
My life make,
In thee I will perish,
With thee will I one day hover
Full of joy
For alway
There when life is over.

11 (34). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And the shepherds then turned back again, glorifying and praising God for all the things which they had seen and had heard, just as it had been told to them.

12 (35). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

Be glad this while,
For now your health
Is here as God and as a man born to you,
The one who is
The Lord and Christ
In David's city, out of many chosen.

1. This *Kyrieleis* 'have mercy, Lord' provides a transition to the first line of the following aria.

Cantata IV

BWV 248IV Fallt mit Danken, fallt mit Loben (Weihnachts-Oratorium IV)

New Year's Day (Feast of the Circumcision).

Poet unknown (Picander?); PT (Leipzig, 1734); Facs: Neumann T, p. 452.

2 (37). Lk. 2:21; 3 and 5 (38 and 40). Johann Rist, the second half of verse 1 of "Jesu, du mein liebstes Leben," 1642 (Fischer-Tümpel, II, #206); 7 (42). Johann Rist, verse 15 of "Hilf, Herr Jesu, laß gelingen," 1642 (Fischer-Tümpel, II, #194).

1 January 1735, Leipzig; Parody: 1, 4, 6 <--- BWV 213/1, 5, 7.

BG 5, 2; NBA II/6.

1 (36). Chorus (S, A, T, B)

Fall and thank him, fall and praise him
At the Highest's throne of grace!

God's own Son
Will of earth the
Savior and Redeemer be now,
God's own Son
Stems our foe's great wrath and fury.

2 (37). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And when eight days were accomplished that the child be circumcised, was his name then called Jesus, which was so named by the angel, before he was conceived within his mother's womb.

3 (38). Recit. (B) and Chorale (S)

Immanuel, O sweetest word!
My Jesus is my shield,
My Jesus is my being.
My Jesus is to me devoted,
My Jesus shall I ever hold
Before my eyes suspended.
My Jesus is my joyful rest,
My Jesus soothes my heart and breast.

Jesus, thou, my life love'd,
Of my soul the bridegroom true,

Come! I would now with joy embrace thee,
My heart shall nevermore release thee,
Thou who didst for me surrender
To the bitter cross's tree!

Ah! Take me to thyself!
E'en in my dying shalt thou my
Most cherished treasure be;

In need, in dread and sore distress
I'll look and yearn for thee.
What cruelty at last can death then hound me with?
My Jesus! When I die here,
I know that I shall never perish.
Thy name is written deep within me,
It hath the fear of death now banished.

4 (39). Aria (S)

Doth, my Savior, doth thy name have
E'en the very smallest kernel
Of that awful terror now?
No, thyself thou sayest "No." (No!)
Ought I now of death be wary?
No, the gentle word is here!
Rather, ought I greet it gladly?
Yes, O Savior, thou say'st "Yes." (Yes!)

5 (40). Recit. (B) and Chorale (S)

O joy, thy name shall now alone
Within my bosom dwell!
Jesus, my true joy and pleasure,
My true treasure, share and hope,
Thus will I call thy name with rapture
When breast and heart for thee with love are burning.
My salvation, crown and health,
But, dearest, tell me now:
How thee to praise, how thee to thank.
King and shepherd, sun and radiance,
Ah, how shall I worthily,
My Lord Jesus, give thee praise?

6 (41). Aria (T)

I would but for thine honor live now;
My Savior, give me strength of will,
That this my heart with zeal may do.

Strengthen me
Thy mercy worthily
And with gratitude to honor!

7 (42). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

Jesus order my beginning,
Jesus bide away with me,
Jesus bridle my intention,

Jesus be my sole desire,
Jesus be in all my thinking,
Jesus, let me never waver.

Cantata V

BWV 248V Ehre sei dir, Gott, gesungen (Weihnachts-Oratorium V)

Sunday after New Year's Day.

Poet unknown (Picander?); PT (Leipzig, 1734); Facs: Neumann T, p. 453.

2 (44). Mt. 2:1; 3 (45). Mt. 2:2; 4 (46). Georg Weissel, verse 5 of "Nun, liebe Seel, nun ist es Zeit," 1642 (Fischer-Tümpel, III, #15); 6 (48). Mt. 2:3; 8 (50). Mt. 2:4-6; 11 (53). Johann Franck, verse 9 of "Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohlen Lüfte," 1655 (Fischer-Tümpel, IV, #109).

2 January 1735, Leipzig; Parody: 3 (45) <--- St. Mark Passion, BWV 247/114; 4 (47) <--- BWV 215/7.

BG 5, 2; NBA II/6.

Christmas Oratorio V

1 (43). Chorus (S, A, T, B)

Glory to thee, God, be sung now,
Thee be praise and thanks prepared,

Thee exalteth all the world,
For our good is thy desire,
For today
Is our ev'ry wish accomplished,
For us thy favor brings such splendid joy.

2 (44). Recit. (T) Evangelist

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the land of Judea in the days when Herod was the king, behold, there came the wise from the East to Jerusalem, who said:

3 (45). Chorus (S, A, T, B) The Wise Men; Recit. (A)

Where doth the newborn babe, the king of the Jews, lie?

Seek him within my breast,
He dwells here, mine and his the joy!

We have indeed his star now witnessed where morning riseth⁽¹⁾ and are come now to give him worship.

Blest ye, who have this light now witnessed,
It is for your salvation risen!
My Savior, thou, thou art that light,
Which to the nations shall shine also,
And they, they do not know thee yet,
As they e'en now would pay thee honor.
How bright, how clear must then thy rays,
Belove'd Jesus, be!

4 (46). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

Thy light all darkness doth consume,
The gloomy night to day transform.
Lead us upon thy pathways,
That we thy face
And glorious light
For evermore may witness!

5 (47). Aria (B)

Illumine, too, my gloomy spirit,
Illumine my bosom
With the beams of thy clear light!

Thy word shall be my brightest candle
In all the works which I shall do;
My soul shall this keep from all wicked endeavor.

6 (48). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And thus when Herod the king had heard this, he trembled, and with him the whole of Jerusalem.

7 (48). Recit. (A)

Wherefore would ye be frightened?
Can my dear Jesus' presence then in you such fear awaken?
Oh! Should ye not by this
Instead be moved with gladness,
That he thereby hath pledged
To make anew mankind's well-being!

8 (50). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And assembling all the high priests and scribes from amongst the people, did he then inquire of them, where the birth of Christ was supposed to happen. And they said to him: "In Bethlehem in the land of Judea; for even thus is it written by the prophet: 'And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judea art by no means the least among the princes of Judah; for from thee shall to me come the ruler, who shall over my people Israel be master.'"

9 (51). Aria (S, A, T)

Ah, when will that time appear then?
Ah, when will his people's hope come?
Hush, he is already here!

Jesus, ah, then come to me!

10 (52). Recit. (A)

My dearest ruleth now.
The heart which his dominion loveth
And gives itself to him entirely
Shall be my Jesus' throne.

11 (53). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

Though in truth my heart's poor lodging
Is no lovely royal hall,
Rather but a dreary chamber,
Yet, when once thy mercy's beams
Bring to it the merest glimmer,
It seems as though with sun to shimmer.

1. I.e., "in the East."

Cantata VI

BWV 248VI Herr, wenn die stolzen Feinde schnauben (Weihnachts-Oratorium VI)

Epiphany.

Poet unknown (Picander?); PT (Leipzig, 1734); Facs: Neumann T, p. 454.

2 (55). Mt. 2:7-8; 5 (58). Mt. 2:9-11; 6 (59). Paul Gerhardt, verse 1 of the hymn, 1656 (Fischer-Tümpel, III, #406); 7 (60). Mt. 2:12; 11 (64). Georg Werner, verse 4 of "Ihr

Christen auserkoren, " 1648 (Fischer-Tümpel), III, #48), to the chorale melody
"Herzlich tut mich verlangen" (cf. BWV 161/1).

6 January 1735, Leipzig; Parody: 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11 (54, 56, 57, 61, 62, 63, 64) <---
BWV 248a; 1 <--- VII/1 (BWV Anh. 10).

BG 5, 2; NBA II/6.

Christmas Oratorio VI

1 (54). Chorus (S, A, T, B)

Lord, when our boastful foes blow fury,
Help us to keep our faith unshaken
And to thy might and help to look!

We would make thee our sole reliance
And thus unharmed the cutting talons
And clutches of the foe escape.

2 (55). Recit. (T, B) Evangelist, Herod

(Evangelist)

Then did Herod summon the wise men in secret, and with diligence he learned from
them when the star was to appear. And he sent them forth to Bethlehem and said:

(Herod)

Go ye forth and search with diligence for the baby, and when ye find him, bring me
word, that I as well may come and worship him.

3 (56). Recit. (S)

Thou liar, seek nought but the Lord's destruction,
Lay ev'ry cunning snare
And pitfall for our Savior;
He, whose great pow'r no man can gauge,
Abides in hands secure.
Thy heart, thy lying heart e'en now,
Along with all its guile, to God's own Son
Whom thou dost strive to fell is fully known.

4 (57). Aria (S)

But a wave of his own hand will
Bring down feeble human might.
Here is all dominion mocked!
Speak the Highest but one word,
His opponents' pride to finish,

Oh, then surely must at once
Change its course all mortal purpose.

5 (58). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And as soon as they had heard the king, they went their way. And lo, the star, which in the East they had seen already, went before their way, until it came and stood above that place where the baby was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with great gladness and went into the house and found there the baby with Mary, his mother, and fell before him and worshipped him and opened up their treasures then and gave to him gold, incense, and myrrh.

6 (59). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

I stand before thy cradle here,
O Jesus-child, my being,
I come now, bring and offer thee
What thou to me hast given.
Take all! It is my spirit, will,
Heart, soul and mind, take all to thee,
And let it serve thy pleasure!

7 (60). Recit. (T) Evangelist

And God then warned them in a dream that they should not go again unto Herod, and they went by another way back to their country.

8 (61). Recit. (T)

Then go! 'Tis well, my treasure leaveth not,
He bideth here with me,
I will not ever let him leave me.
His arm will in his love
With soft affection's warmth
And deepest tenderness embrace me;
He shall remain my faithful bridegroom,
I will my breast and heart assign him.
I know full well he loveth me,
My heart, too, loves him fervently
And shall always adore him.
What harm to me could any foe
Amidst such fortune do now?
Thou, Jesus, art fore'er my friend;
And when in fear I cry to thee:
"Lord, help!," let me thy help behold!

9 (62). Aria (T)

Now may ye boastful foes be frightened;
Ye can in me what fear awaken?
My store, my hoard is here by me.

Be ye unbounded in your fury
And threaten me with utter ruin,
Beware, my Savior dwelleth here!

10 (63). Recit. (S, A, T, B)

What hope hath hell's own terrors now,
What harm will world and sin us do,
While we in Jesus' hands rest sure?

11 (64). Chorale (S, A, T, B)

Now are ye well avengéd
Upon your hostile host,
For Christ hath fully broken
All that which you opposed.
Death, devil, hell and error
To nothing are reduced;
With God hath now its shelter
The mortal race of man.

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