

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 4

A "per omnes versus" chorale employs all 7 stanzas of Luther's popular Easter hymn—itself a paraphrase of the Latin sequence "Victimae paschali laudes." Each stanza ends with the word "Hallelujah," treated in various ways. Unlike Bach's later chorale cantatas, there are no biblical or poetic texts. The structure is essentially an expansion of the original hymn. All movements are in E minor, and all use hymn text verbatim, but each movement has a different musical construction. While the structure of the hymn tune is such that the opening two lines are repeated (= bar form), Bach sometimes varies his treatment of the second statement. Such through-composition occurs in verses 1, 5, and 6. The form is chiastic with Vs. 5 serving as a central pivot (though the final chorale is apparently a Leipzig replacement for an earlier movement now lost). In this later version, the overall structure is chiastic in shape. There are 2 choruses, 2 duets, and 2 solo movements.

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com  
 NBA I/9; BC A54a/b  
 Easter Sunday (BWV 4, 31, 249)  
 \*1 Cor. 5:6-8 (Christ, our paschal lamb has been sacrificed)  
 \*Mk. 16:1-8 (The resurrection of Christ)  
 Librettist: Chorale (Martin Luther)  
 Composed probably 1707 as audition piece for Mühlhausen organ position (St. Blasius Church), revised 1724 (performed with BWV 31 in Leipzig's St. Nicholas Church but during Eucharist), repeated 1725, and incorporated in chorale cantata cycle of 1724-1725.  
 (But see side note.)

Instrumentation: SATB 3 4 5 6 7  
 Duet Solo SATB Solo Duet SATB

## Sinfonia

4/1. Andante

Old, motet (sectional) style without the more operatic recitatives and arias, indebted to Buxtehude and very similar to a cantata by Pachelbel. See Wolff, "Bach's Universe," 120-21.

Vln I intones first phrase of chorale.

measure instrumental introduction conveys the mournful atmosphere in the days following Christ's death with string writing enriched and darkened by the inclusion of two separate viola parts. After a few measures, the opening chorale line, ornamented slightly, is intoned by Vln I.

Instrumentation:  
 Cornetto ad. lib.  
 Tbn I, II, III, IV, ad. lib.  
 Vln I & II  
 Vla I & II  
 SATB  
 Continuo (later, brass double vocal parts)

Divided violas suggest it's an early work (not yet Italian instrumentation).

## Versus I

4/2. Allegro

The first vocal movement, scored for full ensemble, is a masterpiece of chorale elaboration. The sopranos sing the hymn tune in long note values, while the 3 lower voices provide a counterpoint based largely on motives derived from the chorale phrases, and the upper strings play independent figurations. Despite the bar form of the chorale (AAB), Bach writes different music for the two Stollen. The movement ends with 10 mm. of exhortation to praise (mm. 58-67), then 27 mm. of "Hallelujah" in alla breve meter (together constituting more than 1/3 of the movement).

Instruments double the voices, though Vln. 1 is more independent. Two viola parts are typical of Bach's earlier orchestration (before it was influenced by Vivaldi).

3.

lag in To - des -  
lay by Death en -

ban - den, Christ lag in To - des, in To - des -  
shroud - ed, Christ lay en - shroud - ed, by Death en -

lag in To - des - ban -  
lay by Death en - shroud -

Christ lag in To - des - ban - den, Christ lag in  
Christ lay by Death en - shroud - ed, Christ lay by

*mf*

B minor

5.

ban - den  
shroud - ed,

ban - den, in To - des - ban -  
shroud - ed, by Death en - shroud -

To - des - ban - den, in To - des -  
Death, by Death, by Death en -

*dim.* *p*

E minor

B minor

7.

Chorale Phrase 2.

für  
 from  
 den, Christ lag in To - des - ban - - - den für un - ser  
 ed, Christ lay by Death en - shroud - - - ed, from mor - tal  
 - - den, \_\_\_\_\_ in To - des - ban - - den  
 - - ed, \_\_\_\_\_ by Death en - shroud - - ed,  
 ban - - den, in To - des - ban - den  
 shroud - - ed, by Death en - shroud-ed,  
 un - ser Sünd' ge - ge - -  
 mor - tal sin to  
 Sünd' ge - ge - - ben, für un - ser  
 sin to save \_\_\_\_\_ us, from mor - tal  
 für un - ser Sünd' ge - ge -  
 from mor - tal sin to save \_\_\_\_\_  
 für un - ser Sünd' ge - ge - - ben, für un - ser Sünd'  
 from mor - tal sin to save us, from mor - tal sin ge -  
 to

E minor

9.

un - ser Sünd' ge - ge - -  
 mor - tal sin to  
 Sünd' ge - ge - - ben, für un - ser  
 sin to save \_\_\_\_\_ us, from mor - tal  
 für un - ser Sünd' ge - ge -  
 from mor - tal sin to save \_\_\_\_\_  
 für un - ser Sünd' ge - ge - - ben, für un - ser Sünd'  
 from mor - tal sin to save us, from mor - tal sin ge -  
 to

G major

11.

ge - ben, us; save us;  
 Sünd' ge - ge sin to save us, to save

*dim.*

B minor A minor

13.

A

ben, us; er ist wie - der er - stan - us;  
 He is a - gain a - ris -

ben, us; er ist wie - der er - stan - us;  
 He is a - gain a - ris -

ben,  
 us;

*pp* *mf*

E minor

15.

den, wie - der er - stan - den, er ist wie - der er - stan -  
en, a - gain a - ris - en, He is a - gain a - ris -

den, er ist wie - der er - stan -  
en, He is a - gain a - ris -

er ist wie - der er - stan -  
He is a - gain a - ris -

B minor

17.

den, er ist wie - der er - stan -  
en, He is a - gain a - ris -

den, wie - der er stan - den, er ist wie - der er - stan -  
en, a - gain a - ris - en, He is a - gain a - ris -

den, er ist wie - der er - stan -  
en, He is a - gain a - ris -

E minor

19.

er ist wie - - -  
He is a - - -

den, er ist wie - der er - stan - - den, er ist wie -  
en, He is a - gain a - ris - - en, He is a -

den,  
en, er ist wie - der er - stan - -  
He is a - gain a - ris - -

den, er ist wie - der er - stan - - den, er - stan -  
en, He is a - gain a - ris - - en, a - ris - -

B minor

21.

der er - star - - - den, er ist wie - der er - stan -  
gain a - ris - - - en, He is a - gain a - ris - -

der er - star - - - den, er ist wie - der er - stan -  
gain a - ris - - - en, He is a - gain a - ris - -

- den, ist wie - der er - stan - - den, er ist wie -  
- en, is a - gain a - ris - - en, He is a -

den,  
en, er ist wie - der er - stan -  
He is a - gain a - ris - -

23.

**B**

den,  
en,

den, er - stan - den und hat uns  
en, a - ris - en, E - ter - nal

der er - stan - den und hat uns bracht das  
gain a - ris - en, E - ter - nal Life He

den, er - stan - den,  
en, a - ris - en,

*dim.* *p* *cresc.*

B major E minor

25.

bracht das Le - ben, das Le -  
Life He gave us, E - ter -

Le - ben, das Le -  
gave us, E - ter -

und  
E -

*f* *sf*

B minor E minor

27.

ben, und hat uns bracht das He  
nal, E - ter - nal Life He

ben, und hat uns bracht das He  
nal, E - ter - nal Life He Le -  
gave - -

hat uns bracht das He Le - - ben, das  
ter - nal Life He gave - - us, E -

B minor

29.

Le - - - - - ben, das  
gave - - - - - us, E -

- - - - - ben, das Le - - -  
us, E - ter - nal,

Le - - - - - ben, das Le - - -  
ter - - - - - nal, E - ter - - -

B major E minor



31.

hat uns bracht das  
ter - - - - - nal Life He

Le - - - - - ben, und hat uns bracht das Le -  
ter - - - - - nal, E - ter - nal Life He gave

das Le - - - - - Le - ben, und hat uns  
E - ter - - - - - nal, E - ter - nal

- - - - - ben, und  
- - - - - nal, E -

G major

33.

Le - - - - - ben;  
gave us.

- - - - - ben, und hat uns bracht das Le -  
us, E - ter - nal Life He gave

bracht das Le - - - - - ben, und hat uns  
Life He gave us, E - ter - nal

hat uns bracht das Le - - - - - ben, und hat uns bracht das  
ter - nal Life He gave us, E - ter - nal Life He

E minor

E major

A minor

35.

ben;  
us.

bracht das Le - ben;  
Life He gave us.

Le - - - ben;  
gave us.

*dim.* *p* *cresc.*

37.

dess wir  
So now

*C* *C*

E minor

Chorale Phrase 5 (Beginning of Abgesang of bar form).

39.

sol - len fröh - - - lich, dess wir sol - len fröh -  
 let us joy - - - ful, so now let us joy -

dess wir sol - len fröh - - - lich, dess wir  
 So now let us joy - - - ful, so now

dess wir sol - len fröh - - -  
 So now let us joy - - -

41.

- lich, fröh - - lich, fröh - - lich, fröh - lich sein, fröh -  
 - ful, joy - - ful, joy - - ful, joy - ful be, joy -

sol - len fröh - - lich, fröh - - lich, fröh - lich sein, dess wir  
 let us joy - - ful, joy - - ful, joy - ful be, so now

- - - lich, fröh - - lich, fröh - lich, fröh - lich sein,  
 - - - ful, joy - - ful, joy - ful, joy - ful be,

G major

E minor

43.

dess wir sol - - - len  
 So now let us  
 - - - lich, fröh - - lich, fröh - - lich, dess wir sol - len  
 - - - ful, joy - - ful, joy - - ful, so now let us  
 sol - len fröh - - lich, fröh - - lich sein, fröh -  
 let us joy - - ful, joy - - ful be, joy -  
 dess wir sol - len fröh - - lich, fröh - - -  
 so now let us joy - - ful, joy - - -

45.

fröh - - lich sein,  
 joy - - ful be,  
 fröh - lich, fröh - lich, fröh - lich sein,  
 joy - ful, joy - ful, joy - ful be,  
 - lich, fröh - lich, fröh - lich sein,  
 - ful, joy - ful, joy - ful be,  
 - - - - - lich sein,  
 - - - - - ful be,

G major

47.

**D**

Chorale Phrase 6.

Gott lo -  
and mag -

Gott lo - ben  
and mag - ni -

**D**

G major

49.

- - ben und ihm dank - bar sein, Gott lo - ben und ihm dank - bar  
- - ni - fy Him thank - ful - ly, and mag - ni - fy Him thank - ful -

und ihm dank - bar sein, Gott lo - ben und ihm dank - bar  
fy Him thank - ful - ly, and mag - ni - fy Him thank - ful -

E minor

B minor

B major

E minor

51.

sein, ihm dank - bar sein, Gott lo - ben und ihm dank - bar  
 ly, Him thank - ful - ly, and mag - ni - fy Him thank - ful -

sein, ihm dank - bar sein, Gott lo - - - ben und ihm dank - bar  
 ly, Him thank - ful - ly, and mag - - - ni - fy Him thank - ful -

Gott lo - ben und ihm dank - bar  
 and mag - ni - fy Him thank - ful -

A minor A major

53.

Gott lo - - - ben  
 and mag - - - ni - - -

sein, Gott lo - ben und ihm dank - bar, dank - bar sein, Gott lo -  
 ly, and mag - ni - fy Him thank - ful, thank - ful - ly, and mag -

sein, Gott lo - ben und ihm dank - bar, dank - bar sein,  
 ly, and mag - ni - fy Him thank - ful, thank - ful - ly,

sein, Gott lo - ben und ihm dank - bar sein, Gott  
 ly, and mag - ni - fy Him thank - ful - ly, be

E minor B major

55.

und ihm dank - bar  
fy Him thank - ful -

- ben und ihm dank-bar, dank-bar sein, Gott lo - ben und ihm dank-bar  
- ni - fy Him thank-ful, thank-ful - ly, and mag-ni - fy Him thank-ful -

Gott lo - ben und ihm dank-bar sein, Gott lo -  
and mag-ni - fy Him thank-ful - ly, and mag -

lo - ben, Gott lo - ben und ihm dank - bar  
thank-ful, and mag - ni - fy Him thank - ful -

E major B minor

57.

sein,  
ly,

sein, Gott lo - ben und ihm dank - bar sein, Hal -  
ly, and mag-ni - fy Him thank - ful - ly, Chorale Phrase 7.

- ben und ihm dank-bar, dank - bar sein und sin - gen  
- ni - fy Him thank-ful, thank - ful - ly, and sing - ing

sein, ihm dank - bar sein, Hal - le -  
ly, Him thank - ful - ly,

B major E E minor G major

The movement ends with 10 mm. of exhortation to praise (mm. 58-67), then 27 mm. of "Hallelujah" in alla breve meter (together constituting more than 1/3 of the movement).

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59.

le - lu-jah, hal-le - lu - jah, hal-le - lu - jah, hal-le, hal-le - lu -  
 Hal - le - lu - jah, hal-le - lu-jah, hal-le - lu-jah, hal-le - lu -  
 lu-jah, hal-le-, hal-le - lu - jah, und sin - gen Hal - le - lu -  
 and sing - ing

E minor G major

62.

und sin - gen  
and sing - ing

jah, und sin - gen Hal - le - lu - jah, hal-le - lu -  
and sing - ing

jah, hal-le - lu - jah, hal-le-, hal-le - lu - jah, hal-le - lu -  
 jah, hal-le - lu-jah, hal-le - lu-jah, hal-le - lu-jah, hal-le - lu-jah,

A major B minor D major



65.

Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, und sin - gen and sing - ing Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah

E minor G major E minor

68.

Alla breve

jah! Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah

Chorale Phrase 8. Syncopations

Alla breve

E minor D major

71.

le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -  
jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -  
jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal -  
jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -  
jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -

G major E minor A minor D major B minor E minor

74.

jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -  
jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -  
le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -  
jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal -  
jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -

A minor D major G major



83.

le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu-jah, hal-le-lu - jah, hal-le-lu-  
jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal - le - lu-jah, hal-le-lu - jah, hal-le-lu-  
jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le - lu-jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal -  
jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal-le-, hal-le-lu - jah, hal - le - lu -

A minor E minor

This musical system contains four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a grand staff for the keyboard. The lyrics are distributed across the vocal staves. The keyboard part features a simple harmonic accompaniment with some dynamics like *mf* and *f*. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time.

86.

jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal-le - lu -  
jah, hal-le-lu - jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu - jah, hal-le - lu -  
le - lu - jah, hal - le-, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu - jah, hal-le - lu-jah,  
jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal - le - lu-jah, hal-

A minor E minor

This musical system continues the vocal and keyboard parts from the previous system. The lyrics continue across the vocal staves. The keyboard part maintains the same harmonic style. The system concludes with the end of the page.



•Sin caused us all to be enslaved by death (4/3).

4/3. **Versus II** Verse 2 is set as a duo for soprano (singing a slightly elaborated version of the hymn tune) and alto (whose part is similar) over a repeated (ostinato) bass line.

1. **SOPRANO** Chorale Phrase 1.

**ALTO**

*mf legato* *p*

E minor B minor

Drooping 2-note figure derived from chorale opening, heard at beginning of sinfonia.

Descending ostinato bass pattern (E minor scale) in octaves perhaps depicts inexorable descent into death, the wages of sin as described in the text (allusion to Romans 5:12, 17, 19).

4. Two-note figure expands into chorale melody.

den Tod, den Tod, Nie - - - mand  
O Death, O Death, none could

Tod, den Tod, den Tod, Nie - - - mand  
Death, O Death, O Death, none could

*pp* *p*

7. Chorale Phrase 2.

zwin - gen kunnt' bei  
lay - - - thee low, no

zwin - - - gen kunnt'  
lay - - - thee low,

*mf*

10.

al - len Men - - - - - schen - kin - -  
 child of man sub - due

bei al - len Men - - - - - schen - kin - -  
 no child of man sub - due

*p*

E minor G major

13.

**A** Chorale Phrase 3.

dern, thee; das macht, das macht,  
 our sin, our sin,

dern, thee; das macht, das  
 our sin, our

**A**

*mf* *p* *pp*

E minor B minor

17.

das macht al - - - - - un - ser  
 our sin brought all this to

macht, das macht al - - - - - un - ser  
 sin, our sin brought all this to

*p* *mf*

20.

Chorale Phrase 4.

Sünd', pass, kein Un - schuld is  
for there is

Sünd', pass, kein Un - schuld  
for there is

*mf* *p*

B minor E minor

23.

war zu fin - den.  
no health in us.

war zu fin - den.  
no health in us.

*mf*

G major E minor

26.

**B** Chorale Phrase 5 (Beginning of Abgesang Text painting: Death depicted as a "standing still." of bar form).

Da - von kam der Tod,  
There - fore soon came Death,

Da - von kam der  
There - fore soon came

**B**

*p*

E minor



29.

der Tod, der Tod so bald,  
came Death, came Death, ah, soon,

Tod, der Tod so bald,  
Death, came Death, ah, soon,

*mf*

G major

32.

Chorale Phrase 6.

und nahm ü - - - ber  
and threw o - - - ver

und nahm ü - -  
and threw o - -

*cresc.*

E minor

D major

35.

uns Ge - walt,  
us his net,

- - - ber uns Ge - walt,  
- - - ver us his net,

B minor

38. **C** Chorale Phrase 7.

hielt uns in sei - - - nem  
to hold us cap - - - tive

hielt uns in sei - - - nem Reich ge -  
to hold us cap - - - tive fast im -

E minor G major

Text painting: Being held prisoner by death is depicted with low and unmoving notes (the soprano moving below the alto). Martin Petzoldt notes that having the lines "stand still" is similar to mm. 28–31. (See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 2, p. 675.)

Chorale Phrase 8.

Reich ge - fan - - gen, ge - fan - gen. Hal -  
fast im - pris - - oned, im - pris oned.

fan - - gen, ge - fan - gen. Hal -  
pris - - oned, im - pris oned.

E minor E minor

44. This stanza's musical setting of "Hallelujah," is comparatively the most restrained, as is befitting of the text.

- le - lu - jah, hal - - -  
- - - le - - lu - jah, hal - - - le - -

B minor

47.

le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah

B minor E minor

50.

lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah!

dim. p E minor

•Christ conquered sin and death for us (4/4).

Bach sets verse 3 as a kind of trio: the tenor presents the melody, the violins play a brilliant descant of continuous sixteenth notes in unison, while the instrumental bass supports the texture as usual. The violins play a "tumult and joy theme" derived from the chorale tune's opening (see Petzoldt, "Bach Kommentar, vol. 2, p. 675).

4/4. **Versus III**

mf f E minor G major

4. **Tenor**

Chorale Phrase 1.  
Tenor line carries the chorale tune with little variation.

Je - sus Chri - stus, Got - tes  
Je - sus Christ, our God's own

p E minor B minor

7.

Chorale Phrase 2.

Sohn, an un - ser Statt ist  
 Son, for us to earth de -

B major E minor E minor

10.

kom - men,  
 scend - ed;

E minor G major G major

13.

A

Chorale Phrase 3.

und hat die Sün - de  
 and all our sin has

E minor E minor B minor

16.

Chorale Phrase 4.

weg - ge - tan, da - mit dem  
 He a - toned, and so Death's

B minor E minor

19.

Tod ge - nom - men  
rule has end - ed.

E major E minor G major

Chorale Phrase 5 (Beginning of Abgesang of bar form). Text painting to depict Christ's victory over the power of death: The "tumult" figure ceases, then resumes for a bit, before the continuo takes it over with a descending line, while the unison violins play chords.

22.

all' sein Recht und sein' Ge - walt,  
All Death's pow - er here be - low

E minor E minor

Text painting: Violins play chords while continuo takes over the 16ths to depict "Gewalt" (power).

25.

Chorale Phrase 6. Adagio

da blei - bet nichts denn Tod's - - -  
is now a vain, an emp - - -

E minor

Dramatic adagio to depict death's reduction to its mere form/shadow.

Text painting: Abrupt stop (rests) to depict "Nothing remains."

Allusion to 1 Corinthians 15:55-57: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Allegro

B

Chorale Phrase 7.

28.

- ge - stalt, den  
- ty show; his

B minor B major E minor

31.

Stach'l hat er ver - lo - ren.  
sting is lost for - ev - er.

*cresc.*

E minor

Chorale Phrase 8. "Hallelujah" setting is relatively short but animated, since the tenor and continuo join imitatively in the 16th note material of the violins.

34.

Hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-

*f*

A minor G major

37.

jah, hal - le - lu-jah!

*p* *mf*

E minor A minor E minor

40.

*f*

G major E minor E minor

4/5. **Versus IV**

1.



Upper vocal lines not doubled by instruments

The cantata's central movement is in antique motet style: the altos sing the cantus firmus in longer note values, the S, T, B imitate each other with material taken from phrases of the chorale tune. The instruments are silent except for the continuo. We see Bach's musical adroitness in his ability to combine two different keys: although the hymn tune in the alto is set in B minor, the tonality of the movement as a whole remains E minor. This movement's position as keystone of the symmetrical arch, suggests that it holds the key to understanding the work as a whole. Indeed, upon close examination we see that this movement's role as pivot point in Bach's chiasmic (x-shaped) form is mirrored in...

**SOPRANO**

the text, where antithetical concepts are paradoxically inverted: death was vanquished by life through death; one death devoured the other. See more in side note.

Da Tod und Le - ben run -  
With Life and Death em - bat -

**ALTO**

Imitating lines have chorale material in diminution.

Chorale Phrase 1.

**TENOR**

Es war ein wun - der - li - cher Krieg, ein wun - der - li - cher  
It was a won - der - ful a - ray, a won - der - ful ar -

**BASS**

E minor

3.

gen, es war ein wun - der - li - cher Krieg, da Tod und Le - ben run -  
tled, it was a won - der - ful ar - ray, with Life and Death em - bat -

Krieg, da Tod und Le - ben run - gen, da Tod und Le - ben run -  
ray, with Life and Death em - bat - tled, with Life and Death em - bat -

Es war ein wun - der - li - cher Krieg, ein wun - der - li - cher  
It was a won - der - ful ar - ray, a won - der - ful ar -

5.

gen, ein wun-der - li - cher Krieg, es war ein wun-der - li - cher  
 tled, a won - der - ful ar - ray, it was a won - der - ful ar -

Es war ein wun - der - li - cher  
 It was a won - der - ful ar -

gen, es war ein wun-der - li - cher Krieg, es war ein wun-der - li - cher  
 tled, it was a won - der - ful ar - ray, it was a won - der - ful ar -

Krieg, da Tod und Le - ben run - gen, es war ein wun-der - li - cher  
 ray, with Life and Death em - bat - tled, it was a won - der - ful ar -

B minor F# minor

7.

Chorale Phrase 2.

Krieg, da Tod und Le - ben run - gen, da Tod und  
 ray, with Life and Death em - bat - tled, with Life and

Krieg,  
 ray,

Krieg, da Tod und Le - ben run - - - gen, da Tod und  
 ray, with Life and Death em - bat - - - tled, with Life and

Krieg, da Tod und Le - ben run - - - gen, da Tod und Le - ben  
 ray, with Life and Death em - bat - - - tled, with Life and Death em -

D major



9.

A

Le - ben, Tod und Le - ben run - gen, da Tod und Le - ben,  
 Death, with Life and Death em - bat - tled, with Life and Death, with

da Tod und Le - ben  
 with Life and Death em -

Le - ben, Tod und Le - ben run - gen, da Tod und Le - ben run -  
 Death with Life and Death em - bat - tled, with Life and Death em - bat -

run - gen, run - gen, da Tod und Le - ben, Tod und  
 bat - tled, bat - tled, with Life and Death, with Life and

B minor

11.

Chorale Phrase 3.

Tod und Le - ben run - gen,  
 Life and Death em - bat - tled,

run - gen,  
 bat - tled,

- gen, da Tod und Le - ben run - gen, das Le - ben  
 - tled, with Life and Death em - bat - tled, for Life is

Le - ben run - gen,  
 Death em - bat - tled,

E minor

13.

es hat den Tod ver - schlun - gen, das Le - -  
 for Life has won the vic - t'ry, for Life \_\_\_\_\_

das be - hielt den Sieg, das Le - - ben be - hielt den Sieg, es hat den  
 vic - tor o - ver Death, for Life \_\_\_\_\_ con - quers Death, and Death is swal - lowed

das Le - ben  
 for Life is

15.

ben be - hielt den Sieg, es hat den Tod ver - schlun - gen, das Le - ben be -  
 con - quers Death, and Death is swal - lowed up in vic - t'ry, is swal - lowed in

das  
 for

Tod ver - schlun - gen, es hat den Tod ver - schlun - gen, das Le - -  
 up in vic - t'ry, is swal - lowed up in vic - t'ry, is swal -

das be - hielt den Sieg, das Le - - ben be - hielt den Sieg, es hat den  
 vic - tor o - ver Death, for Life \_\_\_\_\_ con - quers Death, and Death is swal - lowed

B minor

17.

hielt den Sieg, das Le - ben be - hielt den Sieg,  
 vic - to - ry; for Life con - quers Death, and Death

Le - - - ben be - hielt den Sieg,  
 Life is vic - tor o - ver Death,

ben be - hielt den Sieg, das Le - ben be - hielt den Sieg, es  
 lowed in vic - to - ry, for Life con - quers Death, and Death is

Tod ver - schlun - gen, das Le - ben be - hielt den Sieg, es hat den  
 up in vic - t'ry, for Life con - quers Death, and Death is swal - lowed

F# minor F# major

Chorale Phrase 4.

19.

es hat den Tod ver - schlun - gen, es hat den Tod ver - schlun -  
 is swal - lowed up in vic - t'ry, is swal - lowed up in vic -

hat den Tod ver - schlun - gen, es hat den Tod ver - schlun -  
 swal - lowed up in vic - t'ry, is swal - lowed up in vic -

Tod ver - schlun - gen, es hat den Tod ver - schlun -  
 up in vic - t'ry, is swal - lowed up in vic -

B minor D major

21.

- gen, ver-schlun - gen, es hat den Tod, es hat den Tod ver -  
 - try, in vic - try, is swal-lowed up, is swal-lowed up in  
 es hat den Tod ver - schlun -  
 is swal - lowed up in vic - to -  
 - gen, ver-schlun - gen, es hat den Tod ver - schlun - gen, ver - schlun -  
 - try, in vic - try, is swal-lowed up in vic - - try, in vic -  
 gen, ver - schlun - gen, es hat den Tod, den Tod, den Tod ver - schlun -  
 try, in vic - try, is swal-lowed up, is swal-lowed up in vic

B minor

23.

**B** Chorale Phrase 5 (Beginning of Abgesang of bar form).

schlun - - - - gen. Die - Schrift  
 vic - - - - try. So - the  
 gen.  
 ry.  
 - - - - - gen.  
 - - - - - try.  
 - - - - - gen. Die - Schrift hat ver -  
 - - - - - try. So - the Say ing  
**B**  
*mf*  
 E minor

25.

hat ver - kün - - di - get, ver - kün - - di - get  
 Say - ing, writ - - ten thus, will come \_\_\_\_\_ to -

Die Schrift hat ver - kün - - di - get  
 So will come to pass \_\_\_\_\_ the Say -

kün - - di - get das, ver - kün - - di - get  
 comes \_\_\_\_\_ to pass, comes to pass \_\_\_\_\_ the Say -

G major

27.

das, die Schrift hat ver - kün - - di - get, ver -  
 pass, so the Say - ing comes \_\_\_\_\_ to pass, the

Die Schrift hat ver - kün - digt das,  
 So the Say - ing comes to pass,

das, die Schrift hat ver - kün -  
 ing, so the Say - ing comes \_\_\_\_\_

das, die Schrift hat ver - kün  
 ing, so will come to pass \_\_\_\_\_

B minor D major B minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 4

**Text painting: Crux of the matter** (one death devouring the other) is depicted/highlighted with a canon derived from the beginning of the chorale phrase, set at one-beat intervals (S-T-B-Continuo). It is as if each voice is swallowed by the next. The resurrection of Easter begins with conquering death.

29.

Chorale Phrase 6.

Canon at the closest possible distance between entries to depict one death devouring the other.

*pesante*  
*p*  
*cresc. e string.*

31.

*a tempo*

33.

dern frass, den an-dern frass,  
 to - ry, in vic - to - ry.  
 an - dern frass,  
 vic - to - ry.  
 dern frass, den an-dern frass,  
 to - ry, in vic - to - ry.  
 frass, wie ein Tod den an-dern frass, wie ein Tod den an-dern  
 up in vic - to - ry, swallowed up, Death in vic - try swallowed

*dim. e rit.*

F# minor

Chorale Phrase 7. The last 2 phrases of the chorale have no preceding counterpoint, rather imitative counterpoint following.

35. **C** [Con moto] Text painting: Imitative repetition of "ein Spott" (a mockery) to depict the act of mocking death.

ein Spott, = mockery ein Spott, ein Spott, ein Spott,  
 O Grave, O Grave, O Grave, O Grave,  
 ein Spott Grave, aus where dem is Tod thy ist vic - to - wor -  
 ein Spott, ein Spott, ein Spott, ein  
 O Grave, O Grave, O Grave, O  
 frass, ein Spott, ein Spott, ein Spott aus  
 up. O Grave, O Grave, O Grave, where

*pp*

F# minor

D major

37.

ein Spott aus dem Tod ist wor - den, aus dem Tod ist wor -  
 O Grave, where is now thy vic - t'ry, where is now thy vic -

den.  
 ry?

Spott aus dem Tod ist wor - den, aus dem Tod ist wor - -  
 Grave, where is now thy vic - t'ry, where is now thy vic - -

dem Tod ist wor - den, ein Spott aus - dem Tod ist wor - -  
 is thy vic - to - ry, O Grave, where - is now thy vic - -

B minor

39.

Chorale Phrase 8. "Hallelujah" set with descending patterns, as if to "put down" death in mockery.

den.  
 t'ry? Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -

Chorale tune descends.

Hal - - - le - lu - jah!

den.  
 t'ry? Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -

den.  
 t'ry? Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -

Bass pattern also descends.

F#7

B minor

G major



42.

*lento*

jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah!

jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah!

jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah!

E minor C major E major

• Christ died as our paschal lamb (4/6).

4/6. **Versus V**  
Bass 1.

Verse 5 is for B alone, accompanied by 4-part upper strings and continuo, Vln I incorporating the chorale phrases until the "Hallelujah" ending. The movement contains clear biblical allusions to the first (Exodus) Passover, and some of the more powerful verbal images are set with rhetorically-derived figures such as the long, low note for "Tod," the long high note for "Würger," and the "zig-zag" figure for "zeichnet." The bass voice part has a range of 2 octaves.

Chorale Phrase 1

Hier ist das rech - te  
For us the East - er

Triple meter for sense of joyful dance. Each phrase of the chorale is sung by the bass and then played (sometimes at the dominant) by Vln I, accompanied by counterpoint in the bass.

Continuo alone. *mf* *legato*

(E minor) E minor

Descending chromatic tetrachord, the traditional rhetorical symbol of lament. But it is not used as a ground bass (as in the "Crucifixus" of the B-minor mass, for example), but only twice: here and at m. 19.

5.

O - ster - lamm, das rech - te O - ster -  
Lamb was slain, the Ver - y East - er

Bass interpolates melodic glosses between chorale phrases.

*espr.* Vln I, Vla also for first 4 notes.

Strings enter.

Continuo is in unison with voice, presumably for increased emphasis.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 4

10.

Chorale Phrase 2.

lamm, da - von Gott hat ge - bo - ten, da -  
Lamb, God's prom - ised boon be - stow - ing, God's

*p* *mf*

E minor

15.

A

von Gott hat ge - bo - ten,  
prom - ised boon be - stow - ing.

*mf*

Descending chromatic tetrachord in continuo.

20.

Chorale Phrase 3.

Text is repeated, unlike in the first Stollen.

das ist hoch an des Kreu - zes Stamm, hoch  
High hung He there up - on the Cross, yea,

*p* *mf*

Vln I, Vla also for first 4 notes. *espr.*

25.

Alfred Dürr & Martin Petzoldt call this a cross figure, with Vln I running parallel to it.

an des Kreu - zes, des Kreu - zes  
high He hung there, high on the

*rit.* *mf*

Vln I

Continuo in unison with voice, B minor presumably for emphasis.

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 4

Chorale Phrase 4,  
*a tempo*

30.

Stamm in hei - sser Lieb' ge - bra - ten, in  
Cross, with Love Su - per - nal glow - ing, with

*a tempo*

Vln I *espr.*

*pp* *p* *mf*

hemiola

B major E minor

35.

Chorale Phrase 5 (Abgesang of bar form).

hei - sser Lieb' ge - bra - ten, das Blut  
Love Su - per - nal glow - ing. His Blood

Text is repeated.

hemiola

*p* *mf*

E minor A minor

Bach abandons the tune for this chorale phrase in favor of making the sign of the cross to represent the Christological equivalent of the sprinkling of blood on the door during Passover.

40.

zeich - net, das Blut zeich - net, zeich - net un - ser  
sprin - kled, His Blood sprin - kled, sprin - kled on our

Continuo alone

45.

**B**

Tür,  
door,

Strings enter.  
*mf cresc.* *f* *dim.* *p* *mf*

G major G major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 4

50.

Chorale Phrase 6 (text repeated).

das Blut zeich - - net un-ser Tür, das  
His Blood sprin - - kled on our door, with

E minor G major

55. Text painting: Long notes for "faith holding."

hält der Glaub' dem To  
Faith, bade Death to pass

E minor B minor

60.

Large leap down of dim. 12th.

de für, das hält der Glaub' dem  
us o'er, His Blood, with Faith, bade

B major E minor

65.

Dramatic depiction of "death" with large leap downward and long note on low E#, and earlier already with held D in Vln I.

To Death de pass für, o'er;

B minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 4

Chorale Phrase 7. Dramatic depiction of "Würger" (destroyer) with long, high bass note (contrasts with previous low note on "death") and 16ths (agitation) in Vln. I. Martin Petzoldt interprets this a depiction of victory (high note) and rejoicing (Vln I). See "Bach Kommentar," vol. 1, p. 677. **[Tempo I<sup>o</sup>]**

70. **animato**

der Würger kann uns nicht, nicht,  
The Slay - - - - -

*Agitated violin part*

Vln I

*pp*

B minor D7 G major

74. Text painting: "Nicht" (nothing) depicted with rests in the voice part and strings dropping out.

- - ger kann uns nicht, nicht,  
- - er can no more, no

[Upper strings silent mm. 74/2-81/2.]

Continuo alone.

D major G major

78.

nicht, nicht mehr schaden.  
more, no more harm us.

Strings enter.  
Vln I *espr.*

*mf*

E minor E minor

82. Chorale Phrase 8 (Vln I plays Chorale Phrase 7).

Hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah

Syncopation to depict excitement.

E minor

86.

- lu-jah, ha-le - lu-jah, hal-le - lu-jah, hal-le - lu-jah, hal-le-, hal-le-lu-

D major G major

91.

Text painting: Extremely large intervals for the voice at the end to express jubilation.

jah, hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu - jah!

E minor E major

• Paschal feast: We celebrate it in the light of joy (4/7). The text relates to the Epistle reading: 1 Cor. 5:6-8 (Christ, our paschal lamb has been sacrificed—Easter as antitype of Passover). Verse 6 is set as a duet for soprano and tenor, who sing the chorale tune imitatively as a fugato, each leading in turn. The continuo bass accompanies them alone with a skipping "joy-motive" (somewhat reminiscent of the regal French Overture), which functions as a quasi-ostinato. Triplets are used to depict joyous words such as Wonne (bliss), Sonne (sun), Gnaden (grace), Herzen (hearts).

4/7. **Versus VI**

1.

**SOPRANO**

Chorale Phrase 1.

So fei - ern wir das ho - he Fest, das  
So let us keep this Ho - ly Feast, this

**TENOR**

So  
So

**Maestoso**

Continuo alone *mf legato*

E minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 4

4. Text painting: High note for "high feast," (i.e., Easter).

Chorale Phrase 2.

ho - - he, das ho - he Fest mit Her-zens-freud' und Won -  
 Ho - - ly, this Ho - ly Feast with glad and gay re - joic -

fei - ern wir das ho - he Fest mit Her - zens - freud' und  
 let us keep this Ho - ly Feast with glad and gay re -

B minor G major

7. Voices adopt triplet rhythm to depict joy ("Wonne" = bliss).

A

- ne,  
 - ing,

Won - - ne, das uns der Her - re  
 joic - - ing, for us the Sun is

Chorale Phrase 3.

E minor E minor

10.

Chorale Phrase 4.

das uns der Her - re schei - nen lässt, er  
 for us the Sun is shin - ing bright, our

schei - nen lässt, er - schei - - - - nen lässt,  
 shin - ing bright, is shin - - - - ing bright,

Text painting: In this second Stollen, the high note comes on "shine."

B minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 4

13.

Voices adopt triplet rhythm to depict joy ("Sonne" = sun).

ist sel - ber die Son - ne,  
Lord Him - self is ris - en.

er ist sel-ber die Son - ne,  
our Lord Him-self is ris - en.

E minor                      G major                      E minor

16.

**B** Chorale Phrase 5 (Beginning of Abgesang of bar form).

der durch sei - ner  
Light - ed by His

der durch  
Light - ed

**B**

E minor

19.

Tripilets get more pervasive in the Abgesang of the chorale's bar form.

Chorale Phrase 6.

Gna - den Glanz er - leuch -  
glow - ing Grace, our ra -

sei - ner Gna - den Glanz er - leuch -  
by His glow - ing Grace, our ra - dian't

*cresc.*

G major                      E minor



22.

- tet uns - re Her - zen  
- diant hearts are glo - ri - zen

uns - re Her - zen  
hearts are glo - ri - zen

B minor

25.

ganz,  
fied,

ganz,  
fied,

B minor

D major

28.

Chorale Phrase 7. C

der Sün - den Nacht ist  
the Night of Sin now

der Sün - den Nacht ist  
the Night of Sin now

*mf*

C

G major

In the tenor, "ist" is extended by one beat, to allow for imitation on the triplets.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 4

31. Text painting: Descending lines to depict "verschunden," the vanishing of sin's night.

ver - schwun  
is o -

ver - schwun  
is o -

*dim.*

*p un poco rit.*

E minor

34. Chorale Phrase 8.

den.  
ver. Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal -

den.  
ver. Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah,

*a tempo*

E minor

G major

37.

le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal -

hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal -

E minor

40.

le - lu - jah!

le-, hal-le - lu - jah!

*f espr.*

E minor

4/8.

**Versus VII**  
**Chorale**

SOPRANO 1.

●Unleavened bread: We eat only it, which is Christ (4/8). The text again relates to the Epistle reading: 1 Cor. 5:6-8 (Christ, our paschal lamb has been sacrificed—Easter as antitype of Passover). Bach evidently added this movement in Leipzig. Though it is a simple, four-part setting of stanza 7 with instruments doubling the vocal lines (as was typical in Bach's later cantatas), it demonstrates Bach's consummate voice leading. For a theory regarding how the cantata ended in its original version, see side note.

Wir es - sen und le - ben wohl im rech - ten O - ster - fla - den,  
Der al - te Sau - er - teig nicht soll sein bei dem Wort der Gna - den,  
We cel - e - brate this Ho - ly Feast in rev - er - ence u - nit - ed.  
The e - vil leav - en works no more, Thy Word its curse has right - ed.

ALTO

Wir es - sen und le - ben wohl im rech - ten O - ster - fla - den,  
Der al - te Sau - er - teig nicht soll sein bei dem Wort der Gna - den,  
We cel - e - brate this Ho - ly Feast in rev - er - ence u - nit - ed.  
The e - vil leav - en works no more, Thy Word its curse has right - ed.

TENOR

Wir es - sen und le - ben wohl im rech - ten O - ster - fla - den,  
Der al - te Sau - er - teig nicht soll sein bei dem Wort der Gna - den,  
We cel - e - brate this Ho - ly Feast in rev - er - ence u - nit - ed.  
The e - vil leav - en works no more, Thy Word its curse has right - ed.

BASS

Wir es - sen und le - ben wohl im rech - ten O - ster - fla - den,  
Der al - te Sau - er - teig nicht soll sein bei dem Wort der Gna - den,  
We cel - e - brate this Ho - ly Feast in rev - er - ence u - nit - ed.  
The e - vil leav - en works no more, Thy Word its curse has right - ed.

*f*

*dim.*

E minor

E minor

5.

Chri - stus will die Ko - ste sein und spei - sen die Seel' al - lein, der  
 Christ Him - self the Feast will be and nour - ish our souls that we by

Chri - stus will die Ko - ste sein und spei - sen die Seel' al - lein, der  
 Christ Him - self the Feast will be and nour - ish our souls that we by

Chri - stus will die Ko - ste sein und spei - sen die Seel' al - lein, der  
 Christ Him - self the Feast will be and nour - ish our souls that we by

Chri - stus will die Ko - ste sein und spei - sen die Seel' al - lein, der  
 Christ Him - self the Feast will be and nour - ish our souls that we by

*cresc.*

F#7 C# dim.  
B minor

9.

Glaub' will keins an - dern le - ben. Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 Faith may gain sal - va - tion. Hal - le - lu - jah!

Glaub' will keins an - dern le - ben. Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 Faith may gain sal - va - tion. Hal - le - lu - jah!

Glaub' will keins an - dern le - ben. Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 Faith may gain sal - va - tion. Hal - le - lu - jah!

Glaub' will keins an - dern le - ben. Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 Faith may gain sal - va - tion. Hal - le - lu - jah!

D major G major D7 E minor B7 C major E major

Deceptive cadence for emphasizing the text: "sola fide" (faith alone).