

“Jesus nahm zu sich die Zwölfe” BWV 22

1. *Jesus nahm zu sich die Zwölfe und sprach: Sehet, wir gehn hinauf gen¹ Jerusalem, und es wird alles vollendet werden, das geschrieben ist von des Menschen Sohn.² Sie aber vernahmen der keines und wussten nicht, was das gesaget war.³*

2. Mein Jesu, ziehe mich nach dir,
Ich bin bereit, ich will von hier
Und nach Jerusalem zu deinen Leiden gehn.
Wohl mir, wenn ich die Wichtigkeit
Von dieser Leid- und Sterbenszeit
Zu meinem Troste kann durchgehends wohl verstehn.

1. *Jesus took aside the twelve [disciples] and said: See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all will be fulfilled that is written [by the prophets]⁴ about the son of man.⁵ But they apprehended none of this, and did not discern what was said [about Jesus’s death].⁶*

2. My Jesus, draw me after you;⁷
I am ready; I wish to go from here
And to Jerusalem for your sufferings.⁸
Well for me if I can understand the weight [of glory]⁹
From this time of suffering and death
Thoroughly well for my consolation.

¹“Gen” is older German for “gegen” in the sense of “toward” or “to.”

²A near verbatim quotation of Luke 18:31, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Er nahm aber zu sich die Zwölfe und sprach zu ihnen: Sehet, wir gehen hinauf gen Jerusalem, und es wird alles vollendet werden, das geschrieben ist durch die Propheten von des Menschen Sohn” (“But he [Jesus] took aside the twelve [disciples] and said to them: see, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all will be fulfilled that is written by the prophets about the son of man”).

³A near verbatim quotation of Luke 18:34, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Sie aber vernahmen der keines und die Rede war ihnen verborgen, und wussten nicht, was das gesaget war” (“But they apprehended none of this, and the speech [of Jesus] was cryptic to them; and [they] did not discern what was said [about his death]”).

⁴In its quotation of Luke 18:31, the libretto skips over Luke’s phrase “by the prophets.” The passages traditionally cited from “the prophets”—Isaiah 53, Zechariah 13:7, Psalm 22—do not employ the term “son of man.”

⁵“Son of man” could refer simply to a mortal human being (Ezekiel 2:1, Psalm 8:4); “*the* son of man,” however, was taken to refer to an apocalyptic redeemer (Daniel 7:13-14)—in Christian interpretation this is God’s messiah, Jesus.

⁶The libretto skips over Luke 18:32-33, which says the prophets had written (see fn. 4, above) that “the son of man” (according to Luke: Jesus) will be handed over to “the gentiles” (Pilate the Roman governor of Judea, with his Roman soldiers) to be mocked, shamefully treated, scourged, and killed, before rising from the dead on the third day. This contingency for their leader is what the disciples could not grasp. Luke 18:31-43 was the gospel portion chanted at the liturgical occasion for which Bach composed the cantata.

⁷The sense of this line—see also line 1 in movement 3, and line 6 in movement 4—is governed by Luther’s rendering of the Song of Songs 1:4, “Zeuch [an older form of “Zieh”] mich dir nach, so laufen wir” (“Draw me after you; so shall we run”). The “you” is the “king,” traditionally understood in Christian interpretation as a foreshadowing of God’s messiah, Jesus; and the “me” is the king’s beloved, understood as a foreshadowing of the church as Christ’s “bride.” In John 12:32 similar language is used of Jesus, who says that “Wenn ich erhöht werde von der Erden, so will ich sie alle zu mir ziehen” (“When I am lifted up from the earth [on to the cross], then will I draw them all to me [in exaltation, to heaven]”). The idea is that the cross acts as a sort of spiritual magnet, drawing believers to Jesus and lifting them up with him toward, and eventually into, paradise.

⁸In Bach’s own manuscripts, the reading here is in the plural (“zu deinen Leiden”); the text booklet for the 1724 performance of Cantata 22 was available to Bach’s congregation in Leipzig, however, reads in the singular (“zu deinem Leiden”).

⁹The sense of this line is derived from 2 Corinthians 4:17, “Unsre Trübsal ... schafft eine ewige und über alle Mass wichtige Herrlichkeit” (“Our tribulation produces an eternal and beyond-all-measure weighty glory”).

3. Mein Jesu, ziehe mich, so werd ich laufen,
 Denn Fleisch und Blut verstehet ganz und gar
 Nebst deinen Jüngern nicht, was das gesaget war.
 Es sehnt sich nach der Welt, und nach dem grössten
 Haufen;
 Sie wollen beiderseits, wenn du verkläret bist,
 Zwar eine feste Burg auf Tabors Berge bauen;
 Hingegen Golgotha, so voller Leiden ist,
 In deiner Niedrigkeit, mit keinem Auge schauen.
 Ach! kreuzige bei mir in der verderbten Brust
 Zuvörderst diese Welt und die verbotne Lust,
 So werd ich, was du sagst, vollkommen wohl verstehen
 Und nach Jerusalem mit tausend Freuden gehen.

4. Mein alles in allen, mein ewiges Gut,
 Verbessere das Herze, verändere den Mut;
 Schlag alles darnieder,
 Was dieser Entsagung des Fleisches zuwider!
 Doch wenn ich nun geistlich ertötet da bin,

3. My Jesus, draw me [after you]; so will I run [the race of faith];¹⁰
 For flesh and blood¹¹ does not understand well and truly,
 Along with your disciples, what was said [about your death].
 It [flesh and blood] craves the world, and the greatest throng;
 They [your disciples] wish, when you are transfigured,
 Indeed to build, along either side [of you], a secure fortress¹² on
 Tabor's mountain;¹³
 Golgotha,¹⁴ on the other hand, so full of suffering
 In your humiliation,¹⁵ [they wish] not to see with their eyes.¹⁶
 Ah, crucify in me, within my corrupted breast,¹⁷
 Above all, this world and forbidden pleasure;
 Thus will I perfectly well understand what you say,
 And go to Jerusalem with a thousand joys.

4. My all in all things,¹⁸ my eternal good:
 Reform my heart, transform my mettle;
 Strike down all
 That is opposed to this renunciation of the flesh.
 But now when I am spiritually put to death here [on earth],

¹⁰On the idiosyncratic wording of this line, see the discussion of Song of Songs 1:4 in fn. 7 above. Hebrews 12:1 partly echoes another relevant strand from that passage, saying “Lasset uns laufen durch Geduld in dem Kampf [i.e., Wettkampf], der uns verordnet ist” (“Let us run, by dint of patience, in the race [of faith in Jesus] that is appointed to us [by God]”).

¹¹The expression “flesh and blood” here means not one’s relatives but (sinful) human nature. This sense is derived from 1 Corinthians 15:50, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Davon sage ich aber, lieben Brüder, dass Fleisch und Blut nicht können das Reich Gottes ererben” (“Hence I [the apostle Paul] say, however, to you dear brothers [in Christ], that [essentially corrupted] flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”). It is the “spirit” that inherits the kingdom of God.

¹²An allusion to the famous Luther hymn “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott” (“A secure fortress is our God”). Bach’s setting of the words “Zwar eine feste Burg” alludes to the beginning of the first phrase of the hymn’s melody, in B-flat major; and his setting of “auf Tabors Berge bauen” alludes to the end of the second phrase, in F major.

¹³The story of the transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-10, Matthew 17:1-9, Luke 9:28-36) involves the disciples Peter, James, and John intending to three build booths/tents/tabernacles (Luther Bibles, “Hütten”) for Jesus (who was transformed in front of them such that his face shone like the sun) and Moses and Elijah (who appeared to them in a vision). The cantata libretto suggests that the three dwellings would make “a [doctrinally] secure [symbolic] fortress” centered on God in the person of Jesus, given that the other two would represent, on either side of him, “the Law” (Moses) and “the Prophets” (Elijah)—Christian faith holds that these categories of ancient Hebrew scripture firmly point to God’s messiah, Jesus, who is also God himself. The name of the “high mountain” where the story of the transfiguration takes place is not indicated, but since the third or fourth century, Mount Tabor (which may have been an ancient sacred site—see the unnamed mountain in Deuteronomy 33:18-19, whose identification with Tabor was endorsed by Luther) has traditionally been commemorated as the location.

¹⁴Golgotha is the site of Jesus’s crucifixion. Its precise location outside the city walls of Jerusalem is not known, but partly because it was said in Matthew 27:55 to be visible from afar, some interpreters, including Luther, thought of this apparently high place as a “mountain.” Mounts Tabor and Golgotha were taken, then, to contrast the glory of transfiguration with the glory of suffering.

¹⁵“Niedrigkeit” refers to the humiliation of Jesus on the cross. Acts 8:33, in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, reads “In seiner Niedrigkeit ist sein Gericht erhaben” (“In his humiliation is his judgment lifted up”), quoting Isaiah 53.

¹⁶That is, the disciples do not want to set their eyes properly on Golgotha and truly “see” the glory in its suffering. The mountain they prefer to see is the dazzlingly glorious Tabor.

¹⁷“The corrupted breast” is a synonymous expression for “the sinful heart.”

¹⁸Modern editions of the cantata read “Mein alles in allem” (efficiently: “my all in all”; strictly speaking: “my all things in every thing”), but all the original Bach sources clearly read “Mein alles in allen,” presumably reflecting the language of Ephesians 1:15-23 in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day, which reads “der ... alles in allen erfüllt” (“he who fulfills all in all things”). In Lutheran interpretation, the “he” here was Jesus. The previous two movements of the cantata begin “My Jesus,” and this movement, then, continues “My all in all [i.e., Jesus—the “you” of line 6].”

So ziehe mich nach dir in Friede dahin!

**5. Ertöt uns durch dein Güte,
Erweck uns durch dein Gnad;
Den alten Menschen kränke,
Dass der neu' leben mag²⁰
Wohl²¹ hie auf dieser Erden,
Den Sinn und all Begehren
Und G'danken hab'n zu dir.²²**

Then draw me after you,¹⁹ into peace, there [in heaven].

**5. Put us to death through your goodness;
Raise us [from the dead] through your grace;
Mortify the Old Adam²³ [within us],
That the New [Adam within us] may live
Here on this earth as well,
And have his disposition and all desires
And thoughts be toward you.**

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



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¹⁹On the language of this line, see fnn. 7 and 10, above.

²⁰In the Bach sources there is some confusion about the text for this line of the hymn, whose standard reading in the hymnbooks of his day was “Dass der neu[e] [Mensch] leben mag.” Bach’s own surviving manuscripts for Cantata 22 are untexted at this point. The text booklet for the 1724 performance of Cantata 22 that was available to Bach’s congregation in Leipzig reads “Dass er neu leben mag” (“That he may live newly”). Three of the four vocal parts for Cantata 96 give “Dass er [ein] neu[es] Leben hab” (“That he may have new life”), and one gives “Dass er neu leben mag.” Cantata 164 gives the same wording as the hymnbooks, and modern editions of Cantata 22 have followed suit.

²¹“Wohl” is apparently used here in the sense of “sowohl.”

²²A stanza of “Herr Christ, der einig Gottes Sohn.”

²³This hymn stanza is not about old people versus new or young people. “Der alte Mensch” and “der neu[e] [Mensch]” are a technical terms from the New Testament, used most prominently in Colossians 3:9-10, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Lüget nicht untereinander; ziehet den alten Menschen mit seinen Werken aus und ziehet den neuen an” (“Do not lie to one another; put off the [fallen] Old Adam and his [sinful] works and put on the New [Adam—the sinless Jesus Christ]”). Further context for understanding this hymn stanza is provided by Romans 5:19, which proclaims that just as through the disobedience of the one man Adam (who ate forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden), people were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man, Jesus (who was sacrificed on the cross), people will be made righteous. Also significant is 1 Corinthians 15:22, which proclaims that as “in Adam” all die, so “in Christ” all will be made alive.