

MUSIC FOR THE FESTIVAL OF THANKS ON THE COMPLETION
OF THE ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH TOWER

First Part. Before the Sermon

1. Chorus

Come together to honor the Lord,
unite in choruses of joy,
and praise Jehovah Zebaoth!
Let happy music of strings resound
and horns and trumpets ring out!
Come, come, praise our God!

2. Accompanied Recitative

The Lord of eternities is all love and goodness,
he turns even adversity into good fortune.
Just look back
at long bygone times,
which the clouds of forgetting already enshroud;
see that glorious form
of the previous temple standing before you!
It stands there still, disappears in clouds;
the golden pinnacle beams like a morning star.
Now suddenly out of the distance
a sea of clouds rolls terribly through the darkness,
and thick snowflakes fill the air;
a stroke of lightning flashes rapidly,
and one hears a thunderclap roar, rattling out.
At once wild flames blaze up at the house
dedicated to the Lord of the Universe.
Human strength and cleverness strive in vain.
It blazes; the tower tips; and finally
the proud edifice collapses in ruin.

3. Aria

When God vows to punish,
how, o how terrible is he!
His cherub rides flaming
out upon storm clouds.
His glance menaces, the sword
of vengeance glows in his hand,
and devastating terror flies
on hurricanes through the land.

4. Recitative

The fine temple lay destroyed in ruin and horror;
we can do nothing but rue it.
Often we slipped with holy trembling
to the place the anger of Jehovah toppled,
and wept with inward grief. Then the Lord saw
the tears of sorrowing children flow.
His very heart grew heavy.
He looked down upon his destroyed house:
the ruin was moistened with tears;
the grave of his servants violated,
and their bones desecrated.
"I shall win them over through mercy.
They shall see that I am still a father,"
thus he spoke. "Build a new Bethel,
and let its splendor be equal to your love!
Never henceforth shall my protection stray from this
house!"

5. Aria

Even with the Creator's goodness longing
to see his creation made happy,
Wisdom often permits the eye of her favorite
to stand full of tears.
Her yearning of motherly devotion
plants for it an Eden after the grave;
therefore the tear oft drops from his cheeks
in trying times.
However, as soon as the chalice of suffering
which she handed to him is drained,
then she rewards him with grace, and he joyfully admits:
The suffering of that time is not equivalent to this bliss.

6. Recitative

You Father of mankind, to you
shall the harp festively resound today.
In your temple we will sing
a solemn song of praise:
for great things have you done unto us, o Lord!
What is man, that you, Lord, should be mindful of him,

and bestow on him what he scarcely dares request!
So accept our offering.
The heart glows with gratitude,
and happy lips sing unto you.

7a. Arietta

*Lord, worthy that legions of angels should serve you,
and that the faith of the people should honor you,
I thank you!
Let me join them in your praises!
I rejoice in you!
And the angels and peoples rejoicing sing your praises
with me!*

7b. Chorus

*Holy, holy, holy is God, the Lord Zebaoth!
All lands are full of his glory.*

8. Chorale

I will praise the Creator
even in dread and torment.
I know my Father above
does not want me to be miserable.
He provides for my joys
as for my calm,
and even the path of suffering
becomes for me the way to this.

When even Heaven grows old
and the world disappears altogether,
the hand can still hold me,
that holds the earth and sky.
I sing songs to Jehovah,
in truth, he takes care of me.
The hour will return
when my cheeks shall laugh.

Yes, God, it will appear,
sunlight follows upon the night,
for you do not so willingly see
the weeping of your children.
You have consoled my heart enough,
you Kindly One.
If I can have only you,
o God, what more do I want!

Second Part. After the Sermon

9. Chorus

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

10a. Recitative

Congregation, gladdened by the Lord,
think of his mercy today with thanks and emotion!
The temple that lay in ruins and ashes
was at last dedicated even more splendidly by you, to
the Lord;
though still incomplete and without adornment,
and without hope of ever seeing it completed.
But what you did not imagine, was accomplished by
the Lord.

He awakened the hearts of upstanding men:
they willingly gave all that you needed
to finish the building of the temple.
And here today you see it created,
through the unveiling of this work,
and you see your splendid edifice disappear in the clouds.
O give thanks with raised-up hands,
thank God and every upstanding man!

10b. Accompanied Recitative

O Michael, you beneath whose tread
lay the serpent of hell,
to you, whom no heaven can contain,
we dedicate this humble dwelling!
We raise heart and hands to you:
let us receive your godly word,
and, Lord, until the end of times,
be the protector and refuge of your Hamburg!

10c. Aria

Earth, hear! Heavens, hear!
Pay heed! Jehovah swears:
"Here shall my dwelling be.
See, this house shall be better,
its splendor shall be greater
than that of the first.
Here my servant shall bear witness to me,
here shall you faithfully entreat me
and I will incline my ear
and always look upon you with mercy."

11. Recitative

So stand then blessed by the Lord,
you work of fine art, until the most distant times,
close to the clouds, and let the gleam
of the proud tower spread afar!
And when the earth has long since covered us,
yet may you shimmer through peaceful fields,
terrified by no tumult of war,
and still show our descendants what fear of God, and
gentleness,
and art and learning of long departed forebears
once held sway within Hamburg's walls.

12. Chorale

Let all the world rejoice in the Lord,
and all you devout sing praises,
and let us come before his countenance today,
happily and with pleasure!
He has been mindful of us
so lovingly, so affectionately;
for God has taken us
into his flock for safekeeping.

So, enter the gates
of his temple with thanks!
Glorify him with songs of praise
in the hearing of his servants!
The whole world thanks him too,
thanks him and worships,
glorifies him aloud and tells
what he has done for us.

For gracious is the Lord
and faithful in preserving the covenant,
and eternally he makes reign
both goodness and truth.
People, gladdened by the Lord,
o heed his command
and praise him in eternity:
how gentle is our God!

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Translator's note:

To keep the focus on the original text, the choice was made to follow the German as literally as possible. I thank Ulrich Leisinger for his kind assistance. Biblical portions are from the King James Version.