



*60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. 61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. 62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. 66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. (Matt 27:60-66)*

So, the priests and Pharisees, rulers of the Jews (and unmitigated hypocrites), took the advice of the Roman Proconsul and made the Tomb as sure as they could make it. Unfortunately for them, and of supreme fortune for us, that was not sure enough! A Roman Watch was a Quaternion of Guards – there were four guards for each watch in the night (a period of three hours). These soldiers faced a dreadful death should they fall asleep on guard duty; however, they were very alert and determined not to pay that penalty! Seals of wax were placed on the corners of the stone covering the entrance to the tomb that were stamped with the Roman Imperial Seal to ensure that no one intruded on the Tomb. But these precautions were not enough. The power of man falls far short of the Almighty Power of God!

Today's hymn is one that tells two sides of the same story – the sorrowful account of the burial Christ, followed by the glorious joy of His resurrection! Robert Lowry wrote both the lyrics and musical score for this timeless hymn of celebration. The tune itself is divided into a dirge followed by an anthem of majestic ecstasy. Lowry published the hymn first in 1875. It is a hymn of deep despair followed by exultant joy in all stanzas.

## Low in the Grave He Lay

*Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior,  
Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!*

### Refrain

*Up from the grave He arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes,  
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,  
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose!  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

*Vainly they watch His grave, Jesus my Savior;  
Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!*

### Refrain

*Death cannot keep its Prey, Jesus my Savior;  
He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!*

### Refrain

***“Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior, Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!”***

No one had ever been more dead than our Lord after those early morning beatings with a cat-of-nine-tails – a whip made of leather thongs with pieces of sharp metal embedded in the tips for the purpose of ripping deep gashes in the flesh. The crown of thorns Jesus wore contributed to great loss of blood, and the incessant interrogation without sleep made His physical condition even less able to bear the cross later in the morning. He hung naked on that old, rugged cross for about six hours in the heat of the sun, and being ridiculed by all of His enemies who gloried in His predicament. After He had yielded His soul up to the Father and died, the Roman guard thrust a well-trained and practiced spear into His chest at the very point at which His heart would have been pierced. From that wound gushed forth blood (from the heart) and water (gathered in the thoracic cavity as a result of acute fatigue and stress). Jesus was laid in a borrowed Tomb (He only needed it for a short three days). There he lay, waiting for an event that had never before happened – a resurrection to eternal life from the dead! He thus opened the WAY for you and me, and all of the elect of God, to follow in that resurrection.

This first verse is full of gloom and sorrow, but observe the change of tenor in the Refrain whose music and wording inspires and lifts to new heights of joy.

***“Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes, He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever, with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!”*** Jesus arose on the third day under the power and authority of His own Word! He triumphed over death, sin, and the Devil. He broke the bars of death and Hell, and set the captives free. He was victorious over that old Serpent of Eden, His heel having crushed that Serpent's head. All that precedes the Resurrection of Christ would have been an empty cup except that Christ rose from the dead. That resurrection assures the same for all who believe and follow Him. We may all shout Hallelujah every morning – not just at Easter – for this mighty and blessed victory of Jesus!

***“Vainly they watch His grave, Jesus my Savior; Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!”*** There is a universe of meaning in the term ‘vainly!’ Certainly, man's

works and labors are nothing. The power of man is less than that of an ant warring against an elephant. Vainly did Rome set her watches over against the Tomb of the Garden. Vainly did they make the tomb 'sure' by their meager and flimsy waxen seal. The Guards of the watch were powerless to intercede at the moment appointed for Christ to arise from that stone Tomb. Brilliant light broke forth from within as the huge stone covering the Tomb was rolled away as if it were made of feathers! The brawny Roman guards fainted in fear as the momentous event transpired! *"2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men."* (Matt 28:2-4) Amazing that these brave soldiers would be terrified at the appearance of a man who had been dead for three days, isn't it!

*"Death cannot keep its Prey, Jesus my Savior; He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!"* Death was finally and fatally defeated by the cross and resurrection. It has no power whatsoever over the Child of God. As the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm describes it, it is only a Shadow of Death. A shadow has no substance at all. *Who His Own Self bare our sins in His Own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by Whose stripes ye were healed* (1 Pet 2:24) The devil, our Adversary and Accuser before God, lost his prosecutorial ability to convict us of our sins. As a matter of fact, we read that the Devil himself will be cast into the Lake of Fire before the White Throne Judgment takes place. *10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. 11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.* (Rev 20:10-12)

So, Jesus, in a matter of three days, redeemed us of our sins, bore our penalty for us, died for us, descended into Hell, and set the captives free. On that third day, He set His own seal on the grave – not that no one could get out, but all who believed would not enter in to eternal death! That is the kind of Savior this hymn praises and adores.

Hopefully, this hymn will be sung in unsurpassed faith by millions around the world; and may those same souls prevail to the waters of Jordan Banks and cross over to glory just as made ready by our Lord.