



This is a hymn for Eastertide written in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century by John of Damascus to the tune of *St. Kevin*, Arthur Sullivan, 1872. It is a joyous celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord and, ultimately, of all who believe. One of the great purposes of hymns is not to arouse emotion, but rather to teach sound doctrine. This hymn achieves that purpose in demonstrating the consistent means of salvation by grace through faith of God from Adam's Fall until our own day. God is not a dispensationalist of the mold of Schofield or other modern theologians. Abraham was saved by faith in Christ and not under any presumed obedience to the law. Of course, once saved, our lives should reflect good works and obedience to the will of God insofar as we are able to obey. Though we fail, He will always pick us up on the way if we confess our sins.

**Come, ye faithful, raise the strain**

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain  
of triumphant gladness!  
God hath brought his Israel  
into joy from sadness:  
loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke  
Jacob's sons and daughters,  
led them with unmoistened foot  
through the Red Sea waters.

'Tis the spring of souls today:  
Christ hath burst his prison,  
and from three days' sleep in death  
as a sun hath risen;  
all the winter of our sins,  
long and dark, is flying  
from his light, to whom we give  
laud and praise undying.

Now the queen of seasons, bright  
with the day of splendor,

with the royal feast of feasts,  
comes its joy to render;  
comes to glad Jerusalem,  
who with true affection  
welcomes in unwearied strains  
Jesus' resurrection.

Neither might the gates of death,  
nor the tomb's dark portal,  
nor the watchers, nor the seal  
hold thee as a mortal:  
but today amidst the twelve  
thou didst stand, bestowing  
that thy peace which evermore  
passeth human knowing.

Alleluia now we cry  
to our King Immortal,  
who triumphant burst the bars  
of the tomb's dark portal;  
alleluia, with the Son  
God the Father praising;  
alleluia yet again  
to the Spirit raising.

That Israel referred to is that of the people of God – every believer by faith from Abraham to our age. *“Come, ye faithful, raise the strain of triumphant gladness! God hath brought his Israel into joy from sadness: loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke Jacob's sons and daughters, led them with unmoistened foot through the Red Sea waters.”* Just as surely as each of us had a hand in the crucifixion of our Lord, we were also in bondage in the Land of Egypt. Egypt is a type for that sin engendered by Hagar and the Law of Sinai. *“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.”* (Gal 4:21-26) I hope you will know that we, too, by faith are sons and daughters of Abraham's promised Seed. We have been set free from the bondage of sin in the same way Abraham was set free by faith in a Redeemer. These sons and daughters of old were a nation baptized beneath the walled waters of the Red Sea, and passed by on dry ground. To Israel, it was a baptism of salvation; to Egypt, it was a baptism of condemnation.

*“'Tis the spring of souls today: Christ hath burst his prison, and from three days' sleep in death as a sun hath risen; all the winter of our sins, long and dark, is flying from his light, to whom we give laud and praise undying.”* Spring is the time of Passover – the time that our Lord was crucified as a Lamb without blemish at the Passover time of sacrifice. But He is also the One who rose from the Tomb on Easter morning. Spring is the time of new, budding life. It holds forth the beauty and promise of growth and increasing joy. Christ conquered, consistent with our Creeds, death and Hell after having been dead and buried for three days and nights. His resurrection was as a burst of sunlight at sunrise after a long, dark night of doubt and fear. His Light is

brilliant, and no darkness can abide it. We reverence God, not man. We praise our Lord, not some dandy prancing on a stage, or behind a pulpit.

*“Now the queen of seasons, bright with the day of splendor, with the royal feast of feasts, comes its joy to render; comes to glad Jerusalem, who with true affection welcomes in unwearied strains Jesus’ resurrection.”* It is not the May Queen that we worship, but the King of Life at spring, and all other seasons. Our royal feast is our Holy Communion which typifies the great Heavenly Feast looming in the future end time – the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Jerusalem to which we are drawn is not some violet and dirty little town in old Judaea, but the New Jerusalem which God has promised in our Eternal Home. The Resurrected Christ will not dwell in that cruel city in which He was crucified, but New and Holy Jerusalem that descends from God out of Heaven. *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 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.”* (Rev 21:1-3)

*“Neither might the gates of death, nor the tomb’s dark portal, nor the watchers, nor the seal hold thee as a mortal: but today amidst the twelve thou didst stand, bestowing that thy peace which evermore passeth human knowing.”* The stone that sealed the craven rock that was Christ’s tomb represents the very gates of death on entry, but life on exit. Christ could not be held by the grave. It is a great valley of the shadow of death (not the real thing) through which we must all pass. Those who would guard our tomb cannot keep it sealed. A sealed tomb will hold a mortal, but not an immortal which we shall be when we are changed at the twinkling of an eye. This resurrection into life is possible because we are following Christ. He knows the Way, and He IS the WAY! Human knowledge is incapable of grasping this divine and heavenly knowledge with which the Christian heart is imbued.

*“Alleluia now we cry to our King Immortal, who triumphant burst the bars of the tomb’s dark portal; alleluia, with the Son God the Father praising; alleluia yet again to the Spirit raising.”* “Praise ye the Lord!” (Alleluia!) Our King is not subject to term limits, but is eternal, immutable, and immortal! In our Triune worship, praise, and prayers, we praise our Lord, and the Father WITH our Lord, and we do so in both SPIRIT and in Truth. Jesus, in His gentle dialogue with the Samaritan Woman at Jacob’s Well, said: *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:23-24) What did Jesus mean? We have a great many churches today of the fundamentalist persuasion that have a commanding understanding and respect for God’s Holy Word; but instead of reasoning with the sinner as Christ did the Woman at the Well, they condemn and pass severe judgment on others. They have the truth, but often (not always) lack love (spirit of the Word). On the other hand, we have churches that observe such spirit in their worship that one wonders if they have even been drinking some spirits. Anything goes as long as they evoke God’s name in their carousing. This is not true and reverent worship. It lacks truth combined with the spirit. More than an elaborate edifice, the Church is a family that loves its Father, its Elder Brother, and its Mother (we might say the Spirit). We do not build a FAMILY – a family is born. A church family is born anew in Christ – all having the same faith, the same love for one another, and the same Father. Let us pray that the Lord will ever keep the Anglican Orthodox Church such a family and guard it from pride, error, and the allurements of the world.

