

## Easter Exordium

Christ is Risen... **He is risen, indeed!**

He didn't just arrive on the scene out of nowhere.

God had been preparing him for this role for decades. [since Mt. Sinai]

We hear stories of his earlier life, of his faithfulness and righteousness.

He was a devout student of God's Word.

He studied the teachings handed down by Moses.

When others were idolatrously carousing and committing all kinds of debauchery,  
he was nowhere in sight. [Gen. 32:15-17 - Golden calf]

Sure, he ate and drank with sinners,

but we are never told that He joined in with their wickedness.

When some leaders of God's people spoke against the Lord's true promises,  
he refused to go along with them, even though he was in the minority.

He believed... he trusted the Lord's promises. [Numbers 13:25-14:9 - report of the 12 spies]

But he did not work alone.

His predecessor had done a lot of heavy lifting.

Turning people's hearts back to the Lord.

"Repent," was his message.

Time and time again, "Repent."

And some people believed.

These wanted the kingdom of heaven.

They wanted to be in the paradise God had promised them.

But the forerunner wasn't the one to accomplish it.

It would not be the forerunners burden to bring the people over and conquer all of the enemies.

So God Himself demonstrated His power in this servant, His chosen one.

The Lord was with him, and by mighty acts he was shown to be the Lord's servant. [Joshua 3:7; Acts 2:22]

The people were to listen to him, obey him,

and through him they would be saved... and conquer all their great and mighty foes.

Even His name tells his work: "Yahweh saves."

And so through *Ye-ho-shu-a* — Joshua, the Lord led the people of Israel from the wilderness  
into the Promised Land.

It was not Joshua that saved, but the Lord (Yahweh) who saved them,

ELH #347:1

who led them safely on their way, as the hymn says, *God had led His Israel into joy from sadness.*

So it is for you. It is not Moses or the Commandments that lead you into paradise,

but "Yahweh Saves"... *Ye-ho-shu-a* in the Hebrew — *Yay-soos* in the Greek, *Jesus* in the English.

He has conquered all your foes: your sin, satan, the world, and yes, even death.

He is the *death of death and hell's destruction* Our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Rise & Rejoice with me as we sing our **Exordium Hymn: #348 - He is Arisen! Glorious Word**

...as follows in Jesus' name:

The Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, 'When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" And Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God." And Joshua said, "Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap."

So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan. <sup>(ESV)</sup>

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.* (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

People loved by God,

It had been 40 years since the Lord called Israel out of slavery (the hard service) of Egypt.

40 years since they had been baptized in the cloud and in the sea. <sup>1 Corinthians 10:2</sup>

40 years of graciously receiving bread and water from the Lord's hand...

40 years of picking up their tents, moving from this place to that place, and settling down...

picking them up, moving, and settling down again...

40 years of trials and temptations... and failure in their faithfulness.

40 years of God's continued forbearance and forgiveness.

40 years of waiting... and wandering... and waiting... and wandering... at the Lord's direction.

But finally they had arrived: They were at the brink of the Promised Land.

All that separated them from "the Land Flowing with Milk and Honey" was... the Jordan River.

But there were no bridges over the Jordan to handle the traffic of a whole nation,

plus flocks and herds, and their all their belongings.

And during this spring time, with the recent winter rains and the melting snow packs from up north, the Jordan was now at flood stage; it had already overflowed its banks.

There was no way to ford the torrential river.

And you couldn't ferry the nation across boat by boat.

It looked hopeless and scary.

So it would seem that this was the exact wrong time for them to try to cross over.

And yet, for the Lord, this was exactly the best time...when it looks the most impossible & dangerous.

But how? Straight through? You bet!

But how? Moses wasn't around to lift his staff over the water like last time at the Red Sea.

This time, it would not be a staff—a stick. This time, it would be a box... the Ark of the Covenant.

(Ark is another word for box.)

Of course it was more than just a box; and it was more than just the things it held in it.

The Ark was the visible place of God's presence.

The people didn't have to wonder about where God could be found, or if He was near them.

And inside the ark was the old covenant, written on stone.

and what is more, its cover was the Mercy Seat of God,

the place upon which the Blood of the Atonement was sprinkled.

And so the Ark of the Covenant was the sign before God that peace with these people

had been made... it had been paid for... a sacrifice had been killed.

So the time had finally come. They had consecrated themselves for how long? Can you guess? 3 days!

And know the priests carrying the Ark went forward.

By God's direction, they left a distance between the ark and the people of about 2,000 cubits,

because, as the Lord had said, **in order that [they] may know the way [they were to] go,**

**for [they had] not passed this way before.**

And as the priests stepped into the water, the river was cut off, the flowing torrent was turned back and started piling up in a heap on the north side, the right hand side of the priests.

And the water on the south failed because there was no more flow in the river.

And yet still more miraculous, even the soil that had just a moment ago been fully saturated,

it was now dry and solid.

The river that had been so harrowing and scary before was now completely overthrown by this box.

And the people (men, women, and children) crossed over safe and sound on dry ground

into the Promised Land without a single loss of life.

...

It's a lot like your life, isn't it?

Obviously, the number of years are different, whether you are older or younger,

but the Lord has called you out of the slavery of sin;

He has baptized you with water and the Word;

He has graciously fed you and given you water to drink;

He has housed you wherever you have gone;

You have been tried and tempted... and fallen;

And He has continued to forbear and forgive;

and then there is the waiting and wandering... even wondering, "How long, O Lord?"

And what now separates you from from the paradise that He has promised you?

It is this big scary thing we call death.

It looks like a river at flood stage, way too powerful to cross over safely. It looks like certain death.

It's a way that we have not passed over before.

So how do you cross it? Straight through? You bet!

But you are not going it alone.

Jesus, your Lord and Savior, has already gone ahead of you.

By His own death on the cross, your Great High Priest took that first step into death.

He, the true mercy seat before God's heavenly throne, has sprinkled His atoning blood for you.

And new covenant has been cut for you, not in stone, but in the flesh of God Himself.

God is at peace with you... and through Jesus, He is near you... with you.

In fact, He stands in the midst of the flood and holds back the torrent so that you can cross safely from this life of wandering and failing and sorrow and suffering into the promised paradise: a life of permanency and victory and joy and gladness.

You have nothing to fear of death, scary though it may appear,

because the Lord is with you. He is with you now... and through death.

In fact, you have already died once... and in water no less, just as Jordan Michael was this morning.

Through Holy Baptism, Christ has sprinkled His cleansing blood upon you,

drowned your sinful nature, and raised up the new man to eternal life.

In Christ, that life will never die. Not even death can kill it.

Thanks be to God.

*When I tread the verge of Jordan, Bid my anxious fears subside;*

*Death of death, and hell's destruction, Land me safe on Canaan's side...* ELH #262:3

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

*Soli Deo Gloria*