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NBA I/12; BC A75

Ascension (BWV 37, 128, 43, 11)

*Acts 1:1–11 (Holy Spirit promised, Christ's ascension)

*Mark 16:14–20 (Great commission, Christ's ascension)

Librettist: Unknown; perhaps Christian Weiß the elder
FP: 18 May 1724 (St. Nicholas in the morning & St. Thomas at afternoon Vespers)

Instrumentation (modest for a feast day):

Ob d'amore I, II

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo (Organo plus 2 unfigured)

J.S. Bach Cantata No. 37 Wer da gläubet und getauft wird

Cantata 37 makes no mention of the Ascension, only the essence of the Gospel as encapsulated in the Great Commission: faith and baptism.

Movement 1:

3 musical ideas and a 3-part form (each section presenting the same text and all 3 ideas, suggesting baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The choral parts are largely inserted into the instrumental fabric ("Choreinbau").
Rit. mm. 1–26 (all 3 musical ideas)
A. mm. 27–40 (entire text; all 3 ideas)
B. mm. 40–63 (entire text; all 3 ideas, some in parallel motion)
C. mm. 63–87 (entire text twice, all 3 ideas: duets in parallel motion, then imitative toward end)

The thematic material for the movement is presented in the long instrumental introduction:

- 1) Opening choral gesture (also the oboes d'amore in the ritornello),
- 2) Vln I & II line, paraphrasing the first line of the chorale "Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot," also somewhat similar to the first phrase of the final chorale (no. 6),
- 3) The last line of the 3rd movement on the chorale tune, "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern."

This material permeates the entire movement, interconnecting vocal and instrumental parts. The 3 ideas are interwoven, creating a unified vocal-instrumental texture, thus perhaps suggesting the Trinity, in whose name baptism is to be practiced. This is reinforced by a formal division into 3 sections. See Petzoldt, "Bach-Kommentar" 2:892–94.



37/1. (Coro.)
(Andante ♩ = 72.)

• Faith and baptism lead to salvation: Mark 16:16a (37/1).

Pianoforte.

Idea 1 (Obs d'amore)
Instrumental Introduction

Insistent Idea 2 (Vlns)

Idea 3.

A major

figura corta (see note)
derived from Idea 2.

figura corta

A major

B7

E major

9.

E major

13.

Bass continues at lower octave. See NBA.

E major

F#7

B minor

B minor

17.

C#7

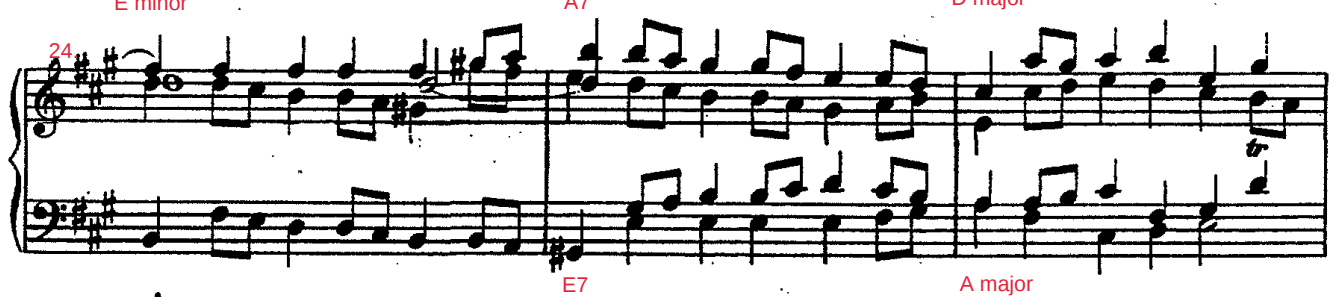
F# minor

F# minor

B7

21.  **figura corta**

E minor A7 D major

24.  **E7 A major**

27. **A Soprano.** The text (Mark 16:16a) is taken from the day's Gospel reading. It introduces a metatheme of the day's reading: baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (made explicit in the parallel Gospel account: Matthew 28:19). By giving Jesus' words to the choir rather than the Vox Christi, Bach emphasizes their universality.

Alto. Wer da glau - bet,

Tenore. Wer da glau - bet, wer - da glau - bet,

Basso. Wer da glau - bet, wer - da glau - bet, wer da.

A Wer da glau - bet,

Idea 1 presented B-T-A-S

SATB begins with continuo alone...

Idea 3

Ob I

Vln II

Idea 2 & 1.

A major A major A major

Possible text painting: Held note for "glaubet" to depict steadfastness of faith; descending continuo line to depict baptism (as if down into the Jordan river—compare 37/5 at mm. 39–41).

33. The sweet harmonic progression and serene vocal lines (almost like Mendelssohn or Brahms), depict the blessedness referenced in the text.

wer - da glau - bet und ge - tauft wird, der

glau - bet, der wird

glau - bet, wer - da glau - bet und ge - tauft wird, der wird

wer da glau - bet und ge - tauft wird, der wird

Ob d'am I holds A. See full score.

Vln I

Ob d'am. II

Wave-like melisma in soprano for "baptized."

A major B7

38. **B** Idea 1 (S-A-B-T)

wird se - lig wer - den, wer da glau -
 se - lig wer - den, wer da glau - bet und ge -
 se - lig wer - den,
 se - lig wer - den, -Obs d'amore wer da glau - bet

B Vln I +Vln II +Vla (see full score)

44. E major E major E7 - A major

Idea 3 inverted

- bet, wer da glau - bet und ge -
 tauft wird, wer da glau - bet und ge -
 wer da glau - bet, wer da glau -
 und ge - tauft wird, wer da glau - bet und ge -

Vln I Ob d'am II Vln II Ob d'am II

49. B(7) E major E major

tauft wird, der wird se -
 tauft wird, der wird se -
 - bet, wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird, der
 tauft wird, wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird, der wird

Insistent idea 2 now used for the opening text.

-Strings Ob d'am I Ob d'am II +Strings

Descending scalar lines, reminiscent of Idea 3, begin to appear.

E major

E7

A major

C#7

F# minor

B7

See NBA for actual continuo octaves.

53. Idea 1 in parallel 6ths

lig wer - den, wer da glau - bet
 lig wer - den, wer da glau -
 wird se - lig wer - den, wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird,
 se - lig wer - den, wer da glaubet und ge -

G#7 C# minor C# minor

57. G#7 C# minor C# minor F#7

und ge - tauft wird, wer da glaubet und ge -
 bet und ge - tauft wird, wer da glaubet und ge - tauft
 wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird, wer da glaubet und ge - tauft
 tauft wird, wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird, wer da glaubet und ge -

Idea 2 in parallel 3rds.
 Descending figura corta sequences

G#7 C# minor C# minor F#7

61. B minor E7 A major C

tauft wird, der wird selig wer - den. Wer da glau -
 wird, der wird selig wer - den. Wer da glau -
 wird, der wird selig wer - den,
 tauft wird, der wird selig wer - den,

Idea 1 in parallel motion
 Section C has much parallel motion but eventually also imitative treatment of the musical ideas.

Ob d'am I
 Ob d'am II up 8va

B7 E major E major

65.

bet und ge-tauft wird, der
bet und ge-tauft wird, der
der
der wird

E major

69.

wird se-lig wer-den,
wird se-lig wer-den,
wird se-lig wer-den, wer da glau-
se-lig wer-den, wer da glau-

Idea 1 in descending parallel motion

Vlns have idea 1 in imitation (see full score).
Vln II
Ob d'am I
Ob d'am II up 8va
Vln I

F#7 B minor B minor F#7 G major deceptive progression D major

73.

der
der
bet und ge-tauft wird, der
bet und ge-tauft wird, der

figura corta

B minor B minor E# dim.7

The figura corta from the end of idea 2 becomes prominent.

77. **D**

wird se - lig wer - den, wer da glau - bet
wird se - lig wer - den, wer da glaubet und ge -
wird se - lig wer - den, wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird,

81. C#7 F# minor B7

bet und ge - tauft wird, wer da glaubet und ge -

und ge - tauft wird, Idea 2 in parallel motion

tauft wird, wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird,

wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird, wer da glaubet und ge -

Sequential descending figura corta

84 E major A7 D major

[illegible]

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 37

Da capo to scriptures such as Ephesians 1:13-14: "In [Christ] you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee (Luther 1545: Pfand) of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.... (See also 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 5:5.)

Aria.

37/2. (Moderato ♩ = 66.)

Bach sets the 5-line poem as a da capo aria in 2 sections, following the poem's rhyme scheme of AB-AAB.

Neither the score nor the obbligato part have survived. The line appears to have been intended for solo violin—probably a fairly challenging part, since the solo violin part for the previous Sunday's cantata (BWV 86, performed 14 May 1724) is demanding (see 86/2). Alfred Dürr reconstructed the part for the collected edition (NBA). Other reconstructions are available.

Reconstructed obbligato for ritornello derived from vocal line.

A major B7 E major E major

figura corta figures in the continuo line

For biblical background, see note.



E major E7 A major C#7 C#7 F# minor E7 A major

Tenore.

Der Glau - be ist das Pfand der

A7 D major E7 A major A7 D major A major

See above note.

Lie - be, die Je - sus für die Sei - nen hegt,

B7 E major E major E7 A major

Reconstructed obbligato derived from tenor line.

der Glau - be ist das Pfand der

A7 D major E7 A major A major A7 D major E major

16. Lie - be, die Je - sus für die Seinen hegt, _____

19. der Glau - be ist das Pfand der Lie - be, die

21. Je - sus, die Je - sus für die Seinen hegt, der Glau - be ist das Pfand der

24. Lie - be, die Je - sus für die Seinen hegt. Reconstructed obbligato derived from tenor line.

27. Ritornello

A major B7 E major E major E7

A major F# minor C#7 F# minor E7 A major

A7 D major E7 A major A major

A7 D major E7 A major A major A7 D major E7

A major B7 E major E major E7 A major

30.

C#7 F# minor E7 A major A7 D major E7

33.

Drum hat er bloss aus Lie - bes -

A major A major C# major F# minor F# minor

"Book of Life" alludes to scriptures such as Luke. 10:20: Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" and Revelation 21:27: "the Lamb's book of life." See also Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 20:12, Philippians 4:3.

35.

trie - be, da er ins Le - bens - buch mich schrie - be, mir

F# minor C# minor G#7 C# minor

37.

die - ses Klei - - - - - nod bei - ge - legt,

C# minor C# minor C# minor

Text painting: Rising scalar melisma for "Kleinod" (prize).

"Kleinod" alludes to scriptures such as Philippians 3:14: "I press on toward the goal for the prize (Luther 1545: Kleinod) of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. See also 1 Corinthians 9:2 (Luther 1545).

Reconstructed obbligato derived from tenor line.

40.

drum

C# minor C# minor

42. hat er bloss aus Liebes - trie - be, da er ins

B7 E major E major

Text painting: Rising scalar melisma for "Kleinod" (prize).

44. Le - bens.buch mich schrie - be, mir die - ses Klei -

E7 A major B7

46. - nod bei - ge - legt, dies Klei - nod, dies Klei - nod, mir

E major E major E7 A major B7

48. die - ses Klei - nod bei - ge - legt.

E major E major E7 A major
Dal Segno.

The form of the movement is that of the continuo concerto: "an older form...cultivated in the seventeenth century, for example Johann Hermann Schein (*Opella nova*; see Introduction, Music Example No. 4). A more modern feature, however, is the greater flexibility of Bach's texture, especially the lively and motivically structured lead taken by the continuo—the sole instrumental accompaniment." Dürr/Jones, 327.

Choral. (Duetto.) (Mel: „Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern“)

(Tranquillo 1/2 ss.)

•Prayer of thanks for love given in Christ; betrothal to Christ (37/3).

Text is fifth stanza of the chorale.

First Stollen of chorale's bar form. Soprano has unembellished tune.

In Bach's first Leipzig cantata cycle, vocal solo or duet cantus firmus settings, usually enriched with an instrumental obbligato part, include 37/3, 44/3, 86/3, 95/3, and 166/3, while chorale allusions may be found in 67/1 and 119/7. See side note for details. Dialogue/duet writing appears in 37/3, 59/1, all of 60, 66/4, 66/5, all of 134, 173/4, 190/5, 194/9, and 194/10.



The continuo bass plays a diminution of the chorale's first line in groups of 8th notes which alternate with scalar 16th notes. The realization (left hand) here is editorial.

Soprano.

Altó.

This movement employs the 5th stanza of 7 in the 1599 chorale by Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608). The trio texture and the triple rhythms may signify the Trinitarian formula for baptism. See Martin Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar* 2:895. The lilting triple meter also suggests the joy of the betrothed bride (soul).

Editorial continuo realization here.

Helmuth Rilling calls this a gigue. See *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2001), pp. 233–235.

Ritornello

f *mf*

D major

Line 1.

Herr

For biblical background, see note.

Canon between voices suggests the mutual love between bride and bridegroom (Christ and the Soul), as referenced in the text. Bach varies the order of entry and which voice gets the more embellished part from phrase to phrase. See side note.

3.

Gott Va - ter, mein star - ker Held!

Herr Gott Va - ter, du star - ker

Alto begins in canon.

p *mf*

D major D major

5.

Line 2.

du hast mich e -

Held! du hast mich

Word painting: "Ewig" ("eternally") is given longer note.

p

D major E7

7. Line 3.

- wig vor der Welt in

e wig vor der Welt in dei

A major A major A7 D major

9. End of the Stollen 1 is extended with embellishment, perhaps alluding to the eternal nature of God's love as referenced in the text.

dei nem Sohn ge lie

nem Sohn ge lie

D major D major

11.

bet.

bet, in dei nem Sohn ge lie bet.

Ritornello *mf*

D major

The literary image of the betrothal of Christ and the soul is rooted in scriptures such as Hosea 2:20: "I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord"; 2 Corinthians 11:2: "I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband."

Text painting: Soprano sings in the upper octave for the reference to the ascended Son.

13.

Second Stollen of chorale's bar form. Alto has unembellished tune.

Line 4.

Dein Sohn hat mich sich

Bach changes the order of voices.

NBA: ihm

D major

15.

mich sich selbst vertraut, er ist mein

NBA: ihm

Line 5.

selbst vertraut, er

D major

D major

17.

Schatz, ich bin sein' Braut, ich bin sein'

ist mein Schatz, ich bin sein'

E7

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19.

Braut, sehr hoch in

Braut, sehr hoch in ihm er

Line 6.

A major A7 D major

Word painting: Long melismas in both voices for "rejoice." Parallel 3rds and 6ths suggest the sweetness of reciprocal love in the divine-human betrothal referenced in the text. See side note for more.

21.

ihm er freu

freu

End of the Stollen 3 is extended with embellishment.

23.

et.

et.

Ritornello

D major D7 G major A7 D major

Continuo realization is editorial (e.g., the incorporation of the chorale's third phrase).

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25. Abgesang of chorale's bar form. The unembellished tune alternates between the voices.

[illegible]

27.

ey - a, ey - a, ey - a, ey - a! himm -

Line 8. Line 9.

ey - a! himm - lisch

A major A7 D major B7 E major F#7 B minor

29. Line 10.

lisch Le - ben wird er ge - ben mir

Le - ben himmlich Le - ben wird er ge - ben mir dort

D major

D major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 37

End of tune is embellished.

31.

Line 11.

— dort o - ben, dort o - ben;
o - ben, dort o - ben; e - wig

Text painting: Leap up for "up there."

D major B minor

33.

Line 12.

e - wig soll mein Herz ihn lo -
eternally shall my heart him

soll mein Herz ihn lo -

Word painting: Endless, florid melismas for "[eternally shall my heart him] praise."

B minor (D major) D major

End of tune is embellished.

35.

Parallel 3rds and 6ths suggest the sweetness of reciprocal love in the divine-human betrothal referenced in the text.

lo - ben, ihn lo -
praise.

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36.

D major

38.

ben.

ben.

f Ritornello *mf*

D major Secco D major

Bass is the voice of authority, suitable here because of the exhortative tone and the many biblical allusions.

Recitativo. • Faith alone, not good works, brings justification (37/4). This movement begins the second half of the cantata's parallel structure. The focus turns to the new life of faith after baptism.

37/4. 1.

Basso.

Ihr Sterb - li - chen, ver - lan - get ihr mit mir das An - t - litz
 You mortals, desire you, with me the countenance

(*p*) "Halo" of strings suggests the countenance of God ("Antlitz").

F# major A# dim.7 B minor

Alfred Dürr observes that this movement, which begins the second half of the cantata presents a refutation of a false view, much like a sermon might. See Dürr/Jones 326.

For biblical background, see note.



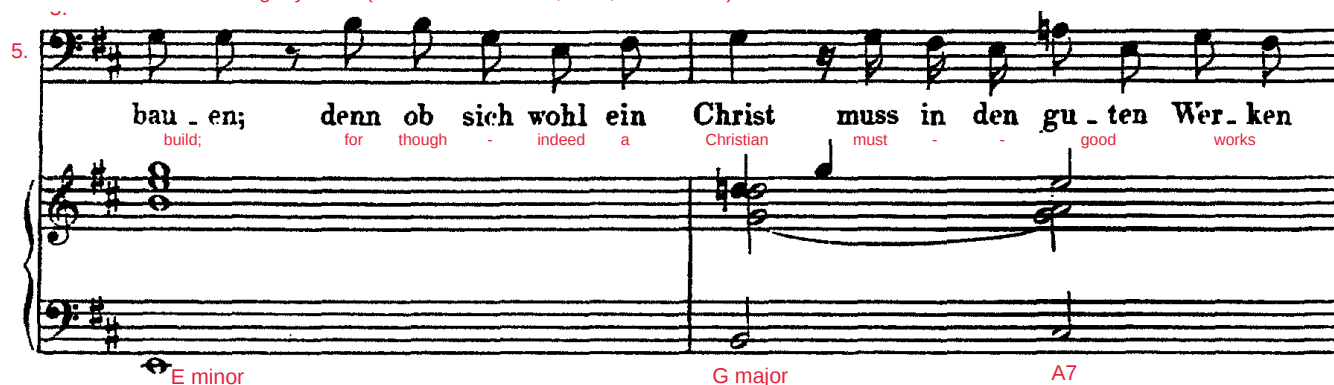
3.

Got - tes an - zu - schau - en, so dürft ihr nicht auf gu - te Wer - ke
 of-God to-see? Then may you not on good works

iv6 V B7

Typical phrygian cadence for question.

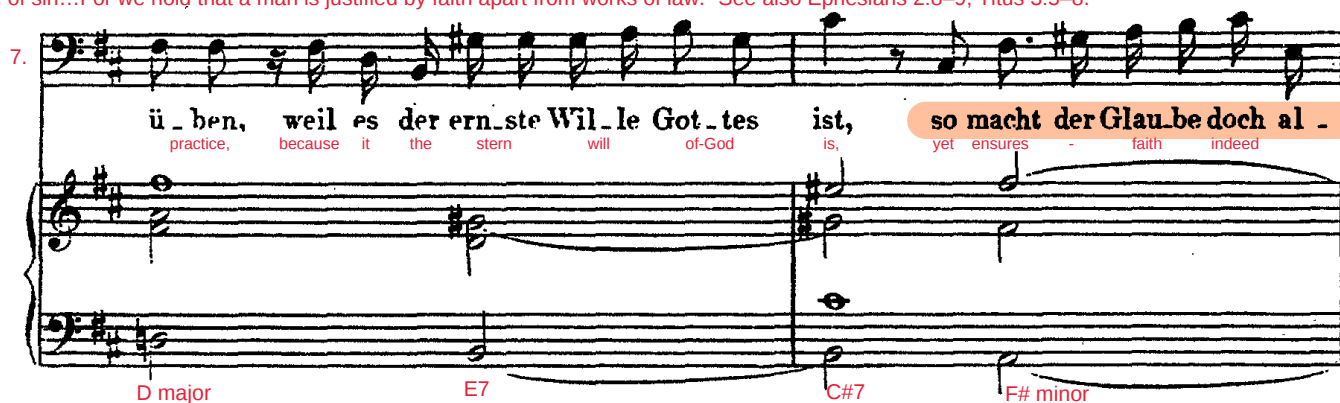
The text alludes to scriptures such as Exodus 33:20: "You shall not see my face; for man shall not see me and live" (cf. Gen. 32:30); John 1:18: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known"; Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; Hebrews 12:14: "Strive for...the holiness without which no one will see the Lord"; Psalm 17:15: "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form." (See also John 1:14, 14:9, 1 John 3:2.)

5. 

bau - en; denn ob sich wohl ein Christ muss in den gu - ten Wer - ken
build; for though - indeed a Christian must - - good works

E minor G major A7

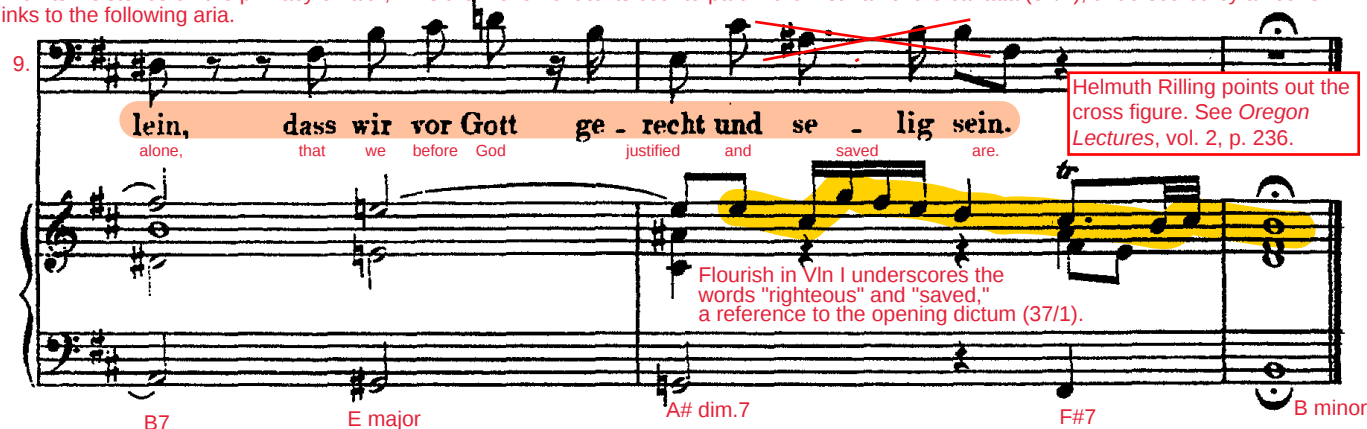
The text alludes to such scriptures as Romans 3:20, 28: "No human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin...For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law." See also Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5-8.

7. 

ü - ben, weil es der ern - ste Wil - le Got - tes ist, so macht der Glau - be doch al -
practice, because it the stern will of-God is, yet ensures - faith indeed

D major E7 C#7 F# minor

This phrase, with its insistence on the primacy of faith, links the movement to its counterpart in the first half of the cantata (37/1), underscored by a flourish in Vln I. It also links to the following aria.

9. 

lein, dass wir vor Gott ge - recht und se - lig sein.
alone, that we before God justified and saved are.

B7 E major A# dim.7 F#7 B minor

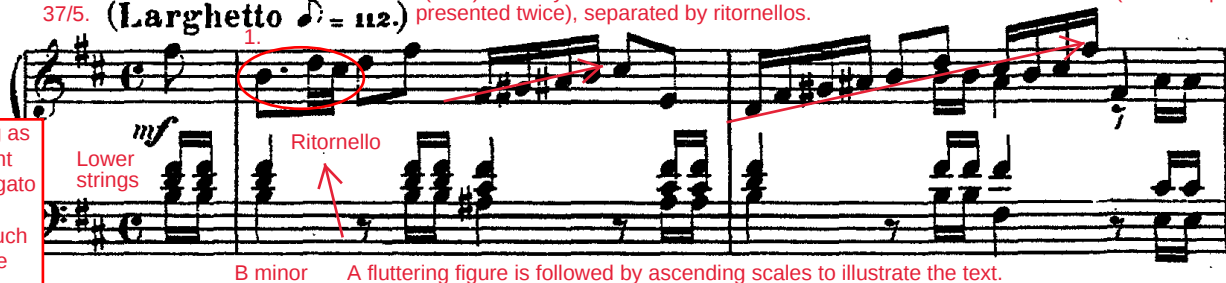
Helmuth Rilling points out the cross figure. See *Oregon Lectures*, vol. 2, p. 236.

Flourish in Vln I underscores the words "righteous" and "saved," a reference to the opening dictum (37/1).

Aria. •Faith brings salvation, baptism is its seal, allowing the soul to soar, i.e., faith is the pre-condition, baptism is the confirmation of salvation (37/5). The rhyme scheme is AB-AB-CC. Bach sets the text in 3 sections (each couplet presented twice), separated by ritornellos.

37/5. (Larghetto $\text{♩} = 112$)

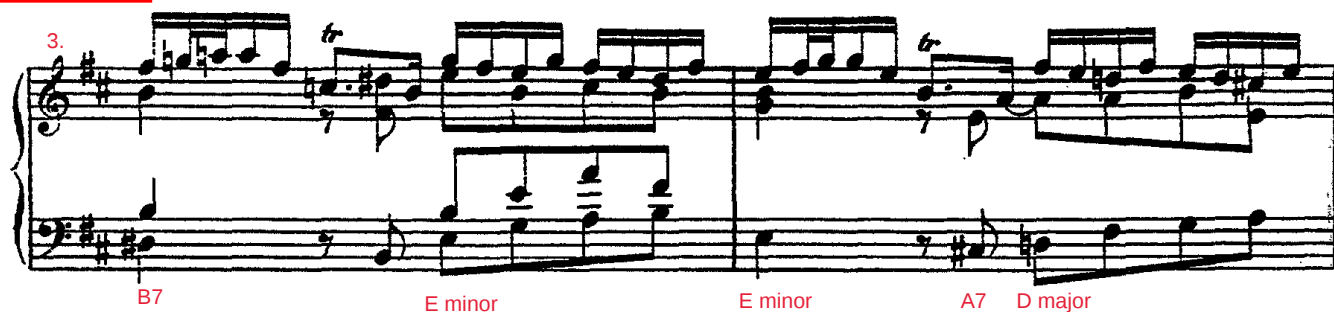
Same key and scoring as the previous movement except the violin obbligato (related to the vocal melody) is doubled much of the time by the oboe d'amore.

1. 

1. Ritornello
Lower strings

B minor A

A fluttering figure is followed by ascending scales to illustrate the text.

3. 

3.
B7 E minor E minor A7 D major

Literar translation: "Faith gives the soul wings to soar into heaven." The texture reflects the text: a "soaring faith" melody supported by a hammering/insistent chordal gesture that alternates between continuo and instruments, presumably a gestural representation of faith and baptism as referenced in the text.

5. **Basso.** Bass = Voice of authority

Couplet 1 (2x).

Key words from the dictum in 37/1 (faith, baptism, salvation) are given emphasis. Faith is given special emphasis, the opening phrase ("Der Glaube schafft...") a literary parallel to the opening of the other aria, 37/2 ("Der Glaube ist...").

For biblical background, see note.



Der

D major A# dim.7 B minor B minor

Text painting: Rising, scalar figures presumably depict faith soaring on wings.

7. Glau - be schafft der See - le Flü -

"Faith" is given an embellishment.

Emphatic, hammering ("fist-like") gesture alternates between continuo and instruments, suggesting the duality of faith and baptism referenced in the text. Note: Continuo realization here is editorial.

Text painting: Ascending scale for soaring up to heaven.

9. - gel, dass sie sich in den Him - mel, den Him - mel schwingt, der

A7 D major

11.

Glau - be schafft der See - le Flü - gel, dass

D major

13.

sie sich in den Him - mel - schwingt, in den Him - mel schwingt, dass sie sich

B7 E minor E minor A7 D major F#7 B minor C#7 D major

Deceptive

The first statement of the 3rd couplet is without oboe d'amore. The instrument then returns for the second statement, perhaps to signify the ordered relationship between faith and baptism (which brings God's blessing), as referenced in the text.

16.

in - den Him - mel schwingt,

-Oboe d'amore

Ritornello

E# dim.7 F# minor F# minor F# minor

18.

Couplet 2 (2x).

"Seal of grace" is given melisma.

die Tau - fe ist das Gna - den -

"Baptism" is given an embellishment.

F# minor A# dim.7 F#7

Gnadensiegel = seal of faith, an apparent reference to the "seal/guarantee of the Holy Spirit" mentioned in the tenor aria (37/2).

21.

Word painting: Melisma for "blessing."

sie - gel, das uns den Se - gen Gottes bringt, die Tau - fe ist das

+Ob d'amore

B minor E7 A major

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23. Melisma for "seal of grace." Melisma for "blessing."

Gna - densie - gel, das uns den Se - - - - - gen Gottes

A major

26. bringt;

mf Ritornello

A major A major A7 D major E7 A major

28. Couplet 3 (2x).

Couplet 3 hearkens back to the literary beginning of the cantata, the dictum "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."

und da - - - her heisst ein

Vln I/Ob d'am I

A major A7 D7 D# dim.7

30. sel' - ger - - - Christ, und da - - - her heisst ein sel' -

E minor E minor A7

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Embellishment for "faith."

Melisma for "baptized."

32. Melisma for "blessed."

ger Christ, wer glau - bet und ge - tau -

D major D major F#7 B minor

34.

- fet ist, und da her heisst ein sel - ger Christ, daher

B minor F#7 G major (deceptive cadence) B7 E minor

The deceptive cadence in m. 34 seems to suggest the possibility of missing this blessing.

Word painting: Two key words are emphasized. Held (immoveable) note for "believes" and melisma for "baptized."

36.

heisst ein sel - ger Christ, wer glau -

A7 D major (F#7) B minor

The emphatic hammering figure returns in the lower strings.

Word painting: Long, descending melisma for "baptized," presumably representing the flowing waters of baptism, perhaps also the energizing presence of the Holy Spirit.

38.

- bet und ge - tau -

B minor A7 B7

Instruments tacet. This realization is editorial.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 37

40.

fet ist. Ritornello

E minor F#7 B minor B minor

42.

B minor

44.

B7 E minor E minor A major D major

46.

D major A# dim.7 B minor B minor

Simple cantional setting but with different harmonizations for the 2 Stollen of the hymn's bar form.

37/6. Choral. (Mel: „Ich dank' dir, lieber Herre“)

•Prayer: Grant me faith, forgive my sins as promised (37/6). Compare the movement's counterpart in the parallel structure (37/3), also a chorale-prayer.

+Ob d'amore I, Vln I

+Ob d'amore II, Vln II

+Vla

Soprano.1.
Den Glauben mir verleihen an dein'n Sohn Je

Alto. Keyword "faith" links to previous 2 movements.
Den Glauben mir verleihen an dein'n Sohn Je

Tenore. Stollen 1 of chorale's bar form.
Den Glauben mir verleihen an dein'n Sohn Je

Basso.
Den Glauben mir verleihen an dein'n Sohn Je

F# minor A major E minor E major A major

This is the 4th stanza of 9 in the ca. 1535 chorale "Ich dank dir, lieber Herre" by Johann Kolrose (d. 1558). This chorale stanza addresses God the Father in the first person. The 9 stanzas of the chorale address God in different ways: "Lord God" (1), "God & Lord" (2), "Lord" (3), "Father" implied (4), "Lord Christ" (8).

Descending chromatic bass = "passus duriusculus," often a descending chromatic fourth, here just a third.

4.

sum Christ, mein' Sünd' mir auch ver - zei - he all - hier zu die

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E major E7 A major B7 E major E major A major

8.

ser Frist. Du wirst mir's nicht ver - sa - gen, was du ver - hei - ssen hast, dass

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E major E7 A major B7 E major E major A major

Abgesang of chorale's bar form.

13.

er mein' Sünd' thu' tra - gen und lös' mich von der Last.

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B major E major A major A# dim. B minor B minor

A major A major A major