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NBA I/5; BC A30

1. S. after Epiphany (BWV 154, 124, 32)

\*Romans 12:1–61 (Christian duty: present yourselves as living sacrifices to God)

\*Luke 2:41–52 (Jesus' parents lose Jesus in Jerusalem and later find him in the temple)

Librettist: Unknown

FP: 7 January 1725 (St. Nicholas)

This cantata belongs to Bach's chorale cantata cycle (see note).

Cantata about clinging to Jesus with ravishing oboe d'amore lines.

Instrumentation:

Corno

Oboe d'amore

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo, Organo

Sarabande-like (Some authors call it a minuet.)

In the opening movement, a concertante oboe d'amore has long swirls of 16th notes that leave little place to breathe. While the chorale cantus firmus is presented in regular note values accompanied by lightly imitative counterpoint, three musical figures from the ritornello provide the instrumental material or the rest of the movement.

## Cantata No. 124

### Meinen Jesum laß ich nicht

(Coro.)

(Tempo giusto. ♩ = 80.)

(Chorale Verse 1) • Clinging to Jesus so not to lose him (124/1).

Oboe d'amore has solo role.

Ritornello

Figure A:

sarabande rhythm.

E major (for significance, see note).

E major

E7

A major

(B7)

E major

E major

E major

E major

G#7

C# minor

F#7

B major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

21. **Soprano.** **+Corno** **A** (Mel.: „Meinen Jesum lass' ich nicht.“)  
**Alto.** **Stollen 1 of chorale's bar form.** Mei - nen Je - sum  
**Tenore.** Mei - nen Je - sum  
**Basso.** **For biblical background, see note.** Mei - nen

**B major** **B major** **B7** **E major** **Figure A. (Figure B).** **The sustained note suggests "clinging to Jesus."**

25. lass' ich nicht, — While the cantus firmus holds its last note, the lower voices repeat the line in light polyphony. Each phrase ending is handled this way but in varied manner and with growing intensity.  
 lass' ich nicht, lass' ich nicht, mei - nen Je - sum lass' ich  
 Je - sum lass' ich nicht, mei - nen Je - sum lass' ich  
 Mei - nen Je - sum lass' ich nicht, Je - sum lass' ich

**E major** **E7** **A major** **B7** **Figure B.**

30. **The lower voices "cling to Jesus" a bit longer, as if oblivious...** **Line 2.** weil er  
 nicht, weil er  
 nicht, weil er  
 nicht, weil er

**cf. m. 8.** **cf. m. 9.** **cf. m. 10.** **cf. m. 11.** **Ritornello Figure C.** **mf Figure B. Tutti**

**E major** **E major**

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

34.

sich für mich ge - ge - ben, weil er sich für mich ge - ge - ben, weil er sich für mich ge - ge - ben, weil er

cf. m. 12. cf. m. 13. cf. m. 14.

Figure C.

F#7 B major B7 (E major) F#7 B major B7

38.

While the cantus firmus holds its last note, the lower voices repeat the line in light polyphony.

sich für mich ge - ge - ben, weil er sich für mich ge - ge - ben, weil er sich für mich ge - ge - ben, weil er

cf. m. 1. cf. m. 2. cf. m. 3. cf. m. 4.

+Str Figure A.

E major

The bass "clings to Jesus" a bit longer, as if oblivious.

42.

Ritornello Figure B.

+Str

Figure C.

E major E major

46.

Figure B.

E major E7 A major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

**C** 50. Line 3.

Stollen 2.

so er - for - dert mei - ne

so er - for - dert mei - ne

so er - for - dert mei - ne

so er - for - dert mei - ne

**C**

*mf* Figure C.

+Str

E major E7 (A major) B(7)

53.

Pflicht, — While the cantus firmus holds its last note, the lower voices repeat the line in light polyphony.

Pflicht, so er - for - dert mei - ne Pflicht,

Pflicht, so er - for - dert mei - ne Pflicht,

Pflicht, so er for - dert mei - ne Pflicht,

(Figure C).

Ritornello Figure B.

G#7 C# minor C# minor

57.

Strings (while ob d'am holds C# for 3 mm....)

Figure A.

Figure A.

C# minor C# major F# minor

62.

Str. ob tr holds...

Figure A.

Figure A.

(Figure C).

C#7 F# minor B7 E major B7 E major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

**D** 67. Line 4.

klet - ten - weis' an ihm zu kle -

klet - ten - weis' an ihm zu kle -

klet - ten - weis' an ihm zu kle -

klet - ten - weis' an ihm zu kle -

**D**

Figure B.

Figure C.

E major E7 A major B7 E major B7

71.

ben.

ben, klet - ten - weis' an ihm zu kle - ben.

ben, klet - ten - weis' an ihm zu kle - ben.

ben, an ihm zu kle - ben.

cf. m. 1. +Str.

cf. m. 2.

cf. m. 3.

cf. m. 4.

cf. m. 6. +Str.

Figure A.

Ritornello Figure B.

E major E major E major E7

77.

*p* Figure C.

*mf* +Str more continuous...

A major A major

81.

C#7 F# minor B7



**E** 84. Line 5.

Abgesang of  
chorale's bar form.

Er ist mei - nes Le - bens

Er ist mei - nes Le - bens

Er ist mei - nes Le - bens

Er ist mei - nes Le - bens

Figure C.

E major E7 A major F#7 B7 G#7

87.

While the cantus firmus holds its last note, the lower voices repeat the line in light polyphony, extending beyond the cantus firmus by 3 measures.

Licht, er ist mei - nes Le - bens Licht, er ist mei - nes Le - bens

Licht, er ist mei - nes Le - bens Licht, er ist mei - nes Le - bens

Licht, er ist mei - nes Le - bens Licht, er ist mei - nes Le - bens

The oboe d'amore circles around C. For possible significance, see note.

C# minor C# minor

90.

The lower voices "cling to Jesus" longer, as if oblivious.

ist mei - nes Le - bens Licht, Le - bens Licht, Licht, mei - nes Le - bens Licht,

ist mei - nes Le - bens Licht, Le - bens Licht, Licht, mei - nes Le - bens Licht,

ist mei - nes Le - bens Licht, Le - bens Licht, Licht, mei - nes Le - bens Licht,

Ritornello Figure A.

C# minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

93. (Figure C.) Figure A. (Figure C), C# minor

97. F#7 B minor E7

100. A major (B7) G# minor E major

103. C#7 F# minor B7

**F** 106. Line 6.  
 mei - - nen Je - - sum lass' ich nicht,  
 mei - - nen Je - - sum lass' ich nicht, mei - - nen  
 mei - - nen Je - - sum lass' ich nicht, mei - - nen  
 mei - - nen Je - - sum lass' ich nicht,  
**F**  
 (Figure C.) Figure B. Figure C.  
 E major E major

While the cantus firmus holds its last note (this time much longer), the lower voices repeat the text another two times (plus "lass ich nicht" once more) in light polyphony. In this way, the chorale's allusion to Jacob wrestling with the angel (Genesis 3:26: I will not let you go unless you bless me") is

connected to the day's Gospel reading (Jesus' parents losing Jesus and not finding him until 3 days later (Luke 2:45-46: When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple). "Clinging to Jesus" also suggests the mystic union of Christ (bridegroom) and the believer (bride). For full text of biblical allusions, see note on biblical background.

110.

Je - sum lass' ich nicht, mei - nen Je - sum lass' ich

mei - nen Je - sum lass' ich nicht, lass' ich

Figure B.

E7 A major A major A major

114.

nicht, lass' ich nicht.

nicht, lass' ich nicht.

Figure C.

Ritornello + Str

A major (B7) E major

117.

C#7 F# minor B7

120.

(Figure B).

Figure B.

E major E major E major



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

124/2. **Secco Recitativo.** (Based on Chorale Verse 2) • Clinging to Jesus in life: Giving him all I am (124/2).  
**Tenore.**

For biblical background, see note.



1. **Secco**

So lan - ge sich ein Trop - fen Blut in Herz und A - dern  
 As long-as - a drop of-blood in (my) heart and veins

A major D major E7

3.

re - get, soll Je - sus nur al - lein mein Le - ben und mein Al - les  
 does-stir, shall Jesus - alone my life and my all

A major C# major F# minor

5.

sein. Mein Je - sus, der an mir so gro - sse Din - ge thut, ich  
 be. My Jesus, who for me such great things does, I

Allusion to Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:49): For he who is mighty has done great things for me (Luther 1545: Denn er hat große Dinge an mir getan).

F# minor (B7) G#7 C# minor

8.

kann ja nichts als meinen Leib und Leben ihm zum Geschenke geben.  
 can indeed nothing less-than my body and life to-him as gift give.

C# minor

The end of the recitative alludes to the Epistle of the day, Romans 12:1: I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

A serenely confident oboe d'amore obligato contrasts with the tenor's jumpy line, which even out into parallel 3rds & 6ths with the oboe for the final 2 lines of text (the last one is a rewording of the chorale's opening text phrase, "I will not let Jesus go"). Throughout, the strings interject trembling figures to depict pervasive fear.

## Aria.

124/3. (Lento  $\text{♩} = 56$ .)

(Based on Chorale Verse 3) • Clinging to Jesus in the pangs of death (124/3).

Form (Rhyme: ABABCC)  
Ritornello (mm. 1-9) F#m  
Lines 1-6 (9-27) F#m-AM  
Rit (27-35) AM  
Lines 1-6 (35-53) AM-EM  
Rit (53-55) EM-Bm  
Lines 1-2, 5-6 (55-63) Bm-F#m  
Rit (63-71) F#m  
Note: The text is repeated as a whole, then repeated a third time without lines 3-4.

For biblical background, see note.

*stacc.*  
F# minor

For more on the "stile concitato," see note.

G#7

Ob d'amore  
Strings repeat a trembling figure ("stile concitato") as ostinato to portray the fear of death.

1. *mf* Ritornello

3.

C# minor A# dim.7 F#7 B minor

6.

C#7 F# minor

## 9. Tenore.

Und wenn der har - - te To - des - schlag

Ob d'am

*pp*

F# minor G#7 C# minor A# dim.7

12.

die Sin - nen schwächt, - die Glie - der -

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

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

15.

rüh - ret, wenn der dem Fleisch verhasste

Ob d'am

F# minor F# minor G#7

19.

Tag nur Furcht und Schrek.

Ob d'am

C# minor A# dim.7 F#7 B minor

22.

ken mit sich füh - ret, doch tröstet sich die Zu - ver -

"Shudder" for "fright."

Ob d'am

E7 A major A major

Text painting: Serene major key for "hope in Jesus," despite continued trembling.

25.

sicht: ich las - se mei - nen Je - sum nicht!

Line 6 rewords the opening text line of the chorale.

Ritornello

A major A major

Here the tenor adopts the oboe d'amore's cantabile manner in parallel 3rds and 6ths, suggesting sweetness.

28.

B7 E minor A7

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

31.

D major E7

34.

Und wenn der har - te To - des.

A major A major C#7

37.

schlag die Sin - nen schwächt,

Ob d'am

F#7 A# dim.7 B minor

40.

die Glie - der rüh - ret,

F# major B7 B# dim.7 G#(7) C# minor

43.

wenn der dem Fleisch verhasst - te Tag

Ob d'am

C# minor D#7 G# minor (E7)

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

46. nur Furcht und Schreck - Shudder - ken mit sich

C#7 F# minor B7 E major

49. Word change from "doch" ("yet") to "so" ("then"),  
 füh - ret, so tröstet sich die Zu - ver - sicht: Ich las - se

Ob d'am Here the tenor adopts the oboe d'amore's cantabile manner in parallel motion.

B7 E major

52. mei - - nen Je - sum nicht!

E major E major E minor F#7

55. Und wenn der har - - te To - desschlag die Sin - nen schwächt, -

Ob d'am

B minor C#7 F# minor



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

Lines 3-5 omitted.

Here the tenor adopts the oboe d'amore's cantabile manner in parallel motion.

58.

die Glie - der - rüh - ret, doch tröstet sich die Zu-ver-

B# dim.7 C# major F# minor

61.

sicht: ich las - se mei-nen Je - sum nicht!

F# minor F# minor

64.

G#7 C# minor A# dim.7

66.

F#7 B minor

68.

C#7 F# minor F# minor

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

## Recitativo.

124/4.

Basso.

(Based on Chorale Verse 4) • Losing Jesus: Reunion with him after death (124/4).

Bass is often the voice of authority, such as the minister.

For biblical background, see note.



1. **Secco**

Doch, ach! welch' schweres Un - ge - mach empfindet noch all - hier die  
 Yet alas, what severe hardship experiences yet here (my)

E(7) F#7 B minor iv6

Phrygian cadence, often used for questions.

3. **Secco**

See - le? Wird nicht die hart gekränkte Brust zu ei - ner Wü - stenei und Marter -  
 soul? Will not my sorely vexed breast (become) a wilderness and den-of-torment?

V B7 D# dim.7

6. Allusion to the Gospel reading: Jesus' parents losing Jesus.

höhle bei Jesu schmerzlichstem Ver - lust? Allein mein Geist sieht gläubig auf und an den  
 with Jesus' most-grievous loss? But-yet my spirit looks in-faith up - to the

Phrygian cadence

A major D# dim.7 B major E7 (F#7)

9.

Ort, wo Glaub' und Hoffnung pran - gen, all - wo ich nach voll - brachtem  
 place where faith and hope shine-resplendent, where I after completed

F# major A# dim.7 B minor

### Biblical allusions:

2 Timothy 4:6-8: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race (Luther 1545: Lauf vollendet), I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."

Song of Solomon 3:4 [Bride]: "I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go."

Luke 2: 27-28. Inspired by the Spirit [Simeon] came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God...

11.

Lauf dich, Je - su, e - wig soll umfassen.  
 race, thee, Jesus, eternally shall embrace.

Word painting: Ascending run for "Lauf."

E7 A major A major

## Duetto. Da capo aria.

124/5. (Allegro moderato  $\text{♩} = 114.$ ) (Based on Chorale Verse 5) • Forsaking the world: Future in heaven with Jesus (124/5).

For biblical background, see note.



1. Ritornello *mf* Continuo alone throughout...

A major B7 E major E7 C# minor

6. E7 A major

12. Soprano. Text painting: Rising scale for the heart's flight from the world.

Ent - zie - he - dich ei - lends, mein Herze, der Welt, du findest im Him - mel dein

Alto.

Canon

In many respects, the duet is reminiscent of BWV 78/2, "Wir eilen mit schwachen, doch emsigen Schritten," written 8 months later for the 14th Sunday after Trinity. There the canonic structure appears to represent two lepers hurrying to Jesus. Here, the scurrying is away from the world to heaven. Mary Greer argues that many of Bach's sacred duets serve as metaphors for faith. Her study includes Cantata 124 but not Cantata 78. See "Embracing Faith: The Duet as Metaphor in Selected Sacred Cantatas by J. S. Bach," *Bach* 34/1 (2003): 1–71. The duet may remind listeners of the day's reading: Mary and Joseph scurrying back to Jerusalem to seek Jesus, only to find him in the temple (a metaphor for heaven).

Ent - zie - he - dich ei - lends, mein

A major

B(7)

E major

19.

wahres Ver - gnü - gen, dein wah - - - res Ver - gnü - gen,

Her - ze, der Welt, du findest im Himmel dein wah - res Ver - gnü - gen,

E major

E7

25.

Ritornello *mf*

C# minor

E7

A major

31.

ent - zie - he - dich  
ent - zie - he - dich ei - lents, mein Her - ze, der Welt, du fin - dest im

A major B minor D major E(7)

37.

ei - lents, mein Her - ze, der Welt, du fin -  
Him - mel dein wah - res Ver - gnü - gen, du fin - dest im

A major E major G# minor C# minor

42.

dest im Himmel dein wah - res Ver - gnügen, dein wah - res Ver - gnügen,  
Him - mel dein wah - res, dein wah - res Ver - gnügen,

B7 E major E major

48. Soprano.

ent - zie - he - dich ei - lents, mein Her - ze, der

Ritornello

E major E major E7 A major



54. *Alto.*  
Welt, du findest im Him-mel dein wah-res Ver-gnü-gen, du-  
ent-zie-he dich ei-lends, mein Her-ze, der Welt,

A major A7 D major E7

59.  
fin-dest im Him-mel dein wah-res, dein  
du fin-dest im Himmel dein wah-res Ver-gnü-gen, dein

C# minor E7 A7 D major 7 E7

65.  
wah-res Ver-gnü-gen, du findest im Himmel dein wah-res Ver-gnü-gen.  
wah-res Ver-gnü-gen, dein wah-res Ver-gnü-gen.

A major A major A major

71. *Ritornello*

B7 E major E7 C# minor



# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

76.

E7 A major 7 A major

82. B Section.

Wenn künf.tig dein Au-ge den  
 Wenn künft'ig dein Au-ge den Heiland er - blickt, dein Au - ge den

A major C# major F# minor F#7 B minor

89.

Hei.land er - blickt, dein Au - ge den Hei.land er - blickt, so  
 Hei - land er - blickt, so wird erst dein seh.nen.des Her-ze er - quickt, dein

B minor B7 E major E7

95.

wird erst dein seh.nen.des Her-ze er - quickt, so wird es in Je-su zu -  
 seh - nen.des Her-ze er - quickt, so

A major A major A major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

101.

frie - den, in Je - su zu - frieden ge - stellt.

wird es in Je - su zu - frie - den ge - stellt.

The tenor's sustained note perhaps suggests "clinging to Jesus" (see Martin Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar* 2:425).

*mf* Ritornello

C#7 F# minor F# minor

107.

F# minor

112. **Soprano.**

Wenn künf - tig dein Au - ge den Hei - land er -

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

117.

blickt, dein Au - ge den Hei - land er - blickt, so

**Alto.**

Wenn künf - tig dein Au - ge den Hei - land er - blickt, dein

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

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 124

122.

wird erst dein seh-nen-des Her-ze er-quickt, dein seh-

Au-ge-den Hei-land er-blickt, so wird erst dein

B major B7 E major

127.

-nen-des Her-ze er-quickt, so

seh-nen-des Her-ze er-quickt, so wird es in Je-su zu-

E major

The alto's sustained note perhaps suggests "clinging to Jesus" (see Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar* 2:425).

132.

wird es in Je-su zu-frie-den ge-stellt.

frie-den, in Je-su zu-frieden ge-stellt.

G#7 C# minor C# minor Da Capo.

With the final stanza, the libretto again to the mystic union of Jesus and the soul by language reminiscent of Song of Solomon 3:4: I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go (Luther 1545: Ich halte ihn und will ihn nicht lassen).

(Verse 6) (See also 154/8, 157/5.) Note: This chorale stanza also ends BWV 154,

Bach's cantata for the same Sunday a year earlier. The tune, by Andreas Hammerschmidt, is also used to end BWV 70.

# 124/6. Choral. (Mel.: „Meinen Jesum lass' ich nicht“)

1. Soprano.

+Corno  
Ob d'am I  
Vln I

+Vln II

+Vla

For biblical  
background,  
see note.



Je - sum lass' ich nicht von mir, geh' ihm e - wig an der Sei -

Je - sum lass' ich nicht von mir, geh' ihm e - wig an der Sei -

Je - sum lass' ich nicht von mir, geh' ihm e - wig an der Sei -

Je - sum lass' ich nicht von mir, geh' ihm e - wig an der Sei -

5. E major

E major

B major

F#7 B major

Text painting:  
The constant  
flow of 8ths in  
the bass line  
depicts  
"Christus lässt  
mich...zu den  
Lebensbächlein  
leiten" ("Christ  
guides me to  
the streams of  
life"), an allusion  
to biblical  
passages such  
as Psalm 23,  
among others  
(see note).



ten; Chri - stus lässt mich für und für zu den Le - bens - bäch - lein

ten; Chri - stus lässt mich für und für zu den Le - bens - bäch - lein

ten; Chri - stus lässt mich für und für zu den Le - bens - bäch - lein

ten; Chri - stus lässt mich für und für zu den Le - bens - bäch - lein

E major

E major

G# minor C#7

F# minor C# minor

9. lei - ten. Se - lig, der mit mir so spricht: Meinen Je - sum lass' ich nicht.

lei - ten. Se - lig, der mit mir so spricht: Meinen Je - sum lass' ich nicht.

lei - ten. Se - lig, der mit mir so spricht: Meinen Je - sum lass' ich nicht.

lei - ten. Se - lig, der mit mir so spricht: Meinen Je - sum lass' ich nicht.

B7

E major

E major

G# minor

C# minor E major

E major