

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 37

Form: Chorus - Aria (T) - Chorale (S/A) - Recit (B) - Aria (B) - Chorale. See side note regarding the bipartite, parallel structure.

Introduction and updates at [melvinunger.com](http://melvinunger.com).

NBA I/12; BC A75

Ascension (BWV 37, 128, 43, 11)

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

\*Mk. 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)



J.S. Bach

## Cantata No. 37

### Wer da gläubet und getauft wird

Instrumentation (modest for a feast day): Alfred Dürr notes that Bach's cantatas for this Ascension Day emphasize one or the other of the themes in the Gospel reading. Cantata 37 makes no mention of the Ascension, only the Great Commission. See Dürr/ Jones 326.

SATB  
Continuo (Organo plus 2 unfigured)

37/1. **(Coro.)** • Faith and baptism lead to salvation: Mk. 16:16a (37/1).  
**(Andante)** ♩ = 72.

The thematic material for the movement is presented in the long instrumental introduction: 1.

- 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.

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, all 3 ideas, parallel motion and then imitative toward end)

**Pianoforte.**



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).  
**Alto.**  
**Tenore.** *Idea 1 presented B-T-A-S*  
**Basso.**  
Wer da glau - bet, wer da glau - bet,  
Wer da glau - bet, wer da glau - bet, wer da.  
Wer da glau - bet,  
*Idea 3*  
Ob I  
Vln II  
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).  
Ideas 2 & 1.

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  
See full score.  
Vln I  
Ob d'am. II  
A major A major A major

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, wer da glau - bet

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

E major E major E7 · A major

44. 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 Vln II

B(7) E major E major

49.

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

E major E7 A major C#7 F# minor B7

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

See NBA for actual continuo octaves.



53. Idea 1 in parallel 6ths

lig wer den, wer da glaubet  
 lig wer den, wer da glaubet  
 wird selig werden, wer da glaubet und getauft wird,  
 selig werden, wer da glaubet und ge-

57. Idea 2 in parallel 3rds.

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

Descending figura corta sequences

61. Idea 1 in parallel motion

tauft wird, der wird selig werden. Wer da glaub-  
 wird, der wird selig werden. Wer da glaub-  
 wird, der wird selig werden,  
 tauft wird, der wird selig werden,

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

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 I  
Vln II

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 -  
 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

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

tauft wird, der wird se - lig wer - den.  
 wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird, der wird se - lig wer - den.  
 wer da glaubet und ge - tauft wird, der wird se - lig wer - den.  
 tauft wird, der wird se - lig wer - den.

figura corta in 3rds

E7

A major

A major

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 37 • Faith is the guarantee (i.e., sign) of Jesus' love for his own (37/2). The text alludes to

Da capo 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.

figura corta figures in the continuo line

A major B7 E major E major

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,

A major B7 E major E major E7

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

A major F# minor F# minor E7 A major

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

A7 D major E7 A major A major

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

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

*mf* Ritornello

27.

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 - gelegt,

Text painting: Embellishment 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.

C# minor C# minor C# minor

40,

drum

C# minor C# minor

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

B7 E major E major

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

Text painting: Melisma for "Kleinod" (prize).

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 A major

**Dal Segno.**

The form of the movement is that of the concerto: cultivated in the seventeenth century, for example by 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.

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.

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

37/3. (Tranquillo  $\text{♩} = 66$ .) •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.

1. **Soprano.**

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.

D major

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.

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.

Alto begins in canon.

D major

Line 2.

D major

The text alludes to scriptures 1:3-5: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...chose us in him before the foundation of the world...He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ.... (See also 1 Peter 1:18-20.)

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



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  
selbst vertraut, er  
Line 5.  
mf p  
D major D major

17.

Schatz, ich bin sein' Braut, ich bin sein'  
ist mein Schatz, ich bin sein'

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19.

Braut, sehr hoch in

Braut, sehr hoch in ihm er

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.

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

Ritornello

D major D7 G major A7 D major

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

Line 7

Word painting: Embellished line for "eya."

Ey - a, ey - a,

Ey - a, ey - a, ey - a, ey - a, ey - a,

*P*

D major F#7 B minor E7

27.

Line 8.

Line 9.

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

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 himmisch Le - ben wird er ge - ben mir dort

D major D major

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End of tune is embellished.

31.

Line 11.

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

D major B minor

Text painting: Leap up for "up there."

33.

Line 12.

e - wig soll mein Herz ihn  
soll mein Herz ihn lo -

B minor (D major) D major

Word painting: Long, florid melisma for "will praise."

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 -



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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.

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.

**Recitativo. Basso.** 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.

Ihr Sterb - li - chen, ver - lan - get ihr mit mir das An - t - litz

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

F# major A# dim.7 B minor

3.

Got - tes an - zu - schau - en, so dürft ihr nicht auf gu - te Wer - ke

iv6 V B7 #5

Typical phrygian cadence for question.

The text alludes to scriptures such as Exodus 33:20: "No human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of 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

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 -

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.

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

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  $\text{♩} = 112$ )

1.

Lower strings *mf*

B minor

Obbligato by oboe d'amore and violin I derived from vocal melody.

3.

B7 E minor E minor A7 D major

Literal translation: "Faith gives the soul wings to soar into heaven." The texture reflects the text: a "soaring faith" supported by a hammering chordal gesture that alternates between continuo and instruments, presumably a gestural representation of faith and baptism (like 2 clenched fists) 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...").

D major                      A# dim.7                      B minor                      B minor

7. Text painting: Scalar figures presumably depict faith soaring on wings.

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.

Glaub - be schafft der See - le Flü -

9. Text painting: Ascending scale for soaring up to heaven.

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

A7                      D major

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

D major

13.

Deceptive

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

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.

-Oboe d'amore

Ritornello

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

18.

Couplet 2 (2x).

"Seal of grace" is given melisma.

"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."

+Ob d'amore

B minor E7 A major



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Melisma for "seal of grace."

Melisma for "blessing."

23.

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

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," perhaps suggesting baptism in the Jordan River; perhaps also the energizing presence of the Holy Spirit.

38.

- - - - bet und ge - tau - - - -

B minor A7 B7

Instruments tacet. This realization is editorial.

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.

Soprano.1. Text is the fourth stanza of nine in the chorale

Alto. Keyword "faith" links to previous 2 movements.

Tenore. Stollen 1 of chorale's bar form.

Basso.

Den Glau - ben mir ver - lei - he an dein'n Sohn Je -

Den Glau - ben mir ver - lei - he an dein'n Sohn Je -

Den Glau - ben mir ver - lei - he an dein'n Sohn Je -

Den Glau - ben mir ver - lei - he an dein'n Sohn Je -

F# minor A major E minor E major A major

+Ob d'amore I, Vln I  
+Ob d'amore II, Vln II  
+Vla

This chorale stanza addresses God the Father. 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).

4.

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

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

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

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

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

8.

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

A major A major A major