

Music in Worship: Where is the Piano?

Byron Howell - July 2009

How important is it to have Bible authority for what we do in worship?

(John 4:24 “worship in spirit and in truth”; Matt. 7:21 “the will of My Father”; Col. 3:17 “do all in the name of the Lord”) What do the scriptures have to say about music in worship?

People who visit our worship services often wonder why we sing without instruments. Where is the piano? There are various reasons why people justify singing “a cappella.”

1. **The early church used vocal music only.** It was so characteristic of the church that “a cappella” means “in the manner of the church or chapel.” Instrumental music was introduced into the Catholic church about 670-800 AD and was in wider use about 1200 AD. Protestant denominations did not introduce the instrument into worship until about 150 years ago. It happened over the strong objections of many Protestant leaders, such as Clarke (Methodist), Calvin (Presbyterian), Luther (Lutheran), & Spurgeon (Baptist).

2. Musical instruments were used in the OT but **we are under a new covenant which does not include instrumental music, incense burning, or animal sacrifices as part of worship.** Using OT opens floodgates for other things. (Heb. 1:1,2; Heb. 9:15)

3. The Bible does not say specifically that instrumental music is prohibited, but **we are supposed to have Bible authority for what we do in worship to God and only singing is authorized.** (Col. 3:17)

4. The Greek word translated “making melody” in Eph. 5:19 has meant the plucking of the strings of an instrument but **by NT times, “psallo” referred to singing. Also, the instrument is specified in Eph. 5:19 as “the heart” (where the “psalting” was to occur.** Furthermore, if “psallo” authorizes instrumental music, every Christian must play one just as every Christian is obligated to sing. (Eph. 5:19)

5. Heaven is described with musical instruments but **our authority for worship on earth doesn't come from the Revelation's highly figurative and heavenly descriptions around the throne of God.** (Rev. 5:8; 15:2)

6. Playing an instrument may seem like simply an “aid” to our singing like the use of songbooks, but **instrumental music is not an “aid,” it is an another type of music. An aid such as a songbook is authorized because we use it to simply carry out the command to sing.** (Col. 3:16)

7. Everyone agrees that singing is acceptable but **adding instrumental music into our worship causes division** in the church. God want us to avoid division. (Eph. 4:4-6, 13)

8. Although instruments of worship were described in the book of Psalms, **we are under a new covenant and we do not get our authorization for worship from Psalms or other parts of the old covenant.** (Heb. 8:8-9; John 4:22-24)

9. **When scriptures specify the kind of music we are to make in worship to God, other types of music are not authorized.** (See “Singing and the Law of Exclusion” chart for examples of how specifying an item automatically disallows other items in the same category. For example, ordering an umbrella does not authorize a raincoat order.)

