# 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 "psalloing" 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.)

☐ Singing and the Law of Exclusion ☐		
Modern Examples	Mail-Order Catalog Items ↓ ↓ ↓ umbrella raincoat	Toppings for Hot Dog  ↓ ↓ ↓  ketchup mustard mayo
Old Testament	Israel ↓ ↓ ↓ Levi Judah	Heb. 7:12-14  Also: Nadab & Abihu (Num. 3:4; Lev. 10:1)
Temptation of Jesus	Recipients of Worship ↓ ↓ ↓ God devil idols	Deut. 6:13; Matt. 4:10 adds "only"
Lord's Supper	Food Items	I Cor. 11:23-29
Music	Types of Music ↓ ↓ vocal instruments	Heb. 13:15

## All NT Verses Relating To Worship on Earth Regarding Music Specify Singing

### Matthew 26:30

When they had **sung** a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

#### Acts 16:25

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and **singing** hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

## Romans 15:9

So that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will **sing** hymns to your name."

#### I Cor.14:15

So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will **sing** with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.

## Eph. 5:19

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. **Sing** and make music in your heart to the Lord.

#### Col. 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you **sing** psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

## Heb. 2:12

He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will **sing** your praises."

#### **James 5:13**

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him **sing** songs of praise.

### Heb. 13:15

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the **fruit of lips** that confess his name.

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