

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89 Form: Aria (B) - Recit (A) - Aria (A) - Recit (S) - Aria (S) - Chorale.

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

NBA I/26; BC A155

22. S. after Trinity (BWV 89, 115, 55)

\*Philippians 1:3-11 (Paul's prayer for the church at Philippi)

\*Matthew 18:23-35 (The parable of the unforgiving servant)

Librettist: Unknown

FP: 24 October 1723 (Leipzig: St. Nicholas). This cantata is part of Bach's first cantata cycle in Leipzig (see note).

The cantata explores themes in Jesus' parable in the Gospel reading: the immensity of human guilt, humanity's ironically common unforgiving spirit, and God's grace.

With BWV 89, Bach began a string of 4 cantatas that employ SATB chorus only in the closing chorale (BWV 89, 163, 60, 90).

J.S. Bach  
Cantata No. 89

Was soll ich aus dir machen, Ephraim

Instrumentation:

Corno da caccia (ad lib.)

Ob I, II

Vln I, II

Vla

SATB

Continuo



**Aria.** Quasi-arioso

89/1. (Larghetto  $\text{♩} = 50$ )

•Voice of God: Israel deserves no mercy: Hosea 11:8 (89/1).

Ob I & II play sighing figures in parallel 3rds.

The oscillating ostinato bass figure may be interpreted as God's apparent indecision (see m. 36; also BWV 55/1 and 105/3 (vacillation) and 150/6 (wavering determination). Alternatively, it may suggest God's rumbling anger.

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

**Basso.** (Vox Dei)

Was

911

soll ich aus dir machen, was soll ich aus dir machen, E - phraim?

Concerning the names Ephraim, Admah, and Zeboiim, see note.



J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

12

Was soll ich aus dir machen, was

C minor C minor

14<sup>II</sup>

soll ich aus dir machen, E - phraim? Soll ich dich schüt -

Rhetorical Question 1.  
The music falters as the question is emphasized with a pause.

Vokaleinbau (Vokal insertioni)

B dim.7 C minor E-flat major

17

Word painting: Sustained note, then long melisma for "schützen" ("protect"). zen, soll ich dich schüt -

E-flat major

19<sup>II</sup>

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

## Rhetorical Question 2.

22

-zen, I - sra-el? Soll ich nicht billigein A -

The music falters as the question is emphasized with a pause.

E-flat major F minor F minor E dim.7

24<sup>II</sup>

-dama aus dir ma-chen und dich wie Ze - bo -

F minor

27

- im zu - rich - ten?

The music falters as the question is emphasized with a pause.

F minor

30

A - ber mein Herz ist anders Sin - nes, mein Herz ist anders

But my heart is of different mind. Vokaleinbau (Vocal insertion)

Tritone interval between singer and bass signals reversal.

F# dim.7 G minor G minor

The idea that God is of a different mind, offering love instead of harsh judgment, is portrayed with a harmonic progression that travels in a different direction.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

Text painting: Wandering melisma for "different mind."

33

Sin - nes, mein Herz ist an - ders Sinnes, mein Herz ist an -

Oscillating figure for "anders Sinnes" ("different mind").

G minor G minor

35II

- ders Sin - nes, mein

G minor G minor

38

Herz ist an - ders Sin - nes, an - ders Sin - nes, mein Herz

G minor G minor

40

ist an - ders Sinnes, mein Herz ist anders Sinnes, mei - ne Barm

B-flat 7 E-flat major G7 C minor C minor

Vokaleinbau (vocal insertion)

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

43

her - zigkeit ist zu brün - stig, mei - ne Barmher - zigkeit ist zu

C minor

Word painting: Long, flickering coloratura for "brünstig" ("ardent").

46

brün -

48 II

- stig, zu brünstig, zu brün -

C7

F minor

51

- stig, meine Barmherzigkeit ist zu brünstig, zu brün - stig.

D7 G7 C minor C minor

*mf*

Dal Segno.

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

Secco

89/2. **Recitativo.** • Judgment well-deserved; man himself shows no mercy (89/2).

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 9 mm.

1. **Alto.** A F# D C B-flat E-flat

Alto is often the voice of faith.

Ja, freilich soll-te Gott ein Wort zum Ur-theilsprechen und seines

D major G minor

3 F A-flat D-flat G

Namens Spott an seinen Feinden rächen. Un-zählbar ist die Rechnung deiner

B-flat (7) E dim.7 F major B-flat major

6

Sün-den, und hät-te Gott auch gleich Ge - duld, ver-wirft doch dein feind-

B dim.7 G7 C minor A dim.

8 B-flat G F G# B B E E

se - li - ges Ge - mü - the die an - ge - bot - ne Gü - te und drückt den Nächsten um die

The references to "God's proffered kindness" and "pressing your neighbor over his debt" refer directly to the Gospel reading (see note).

D7 G minor B-flat major G# dim.7 E7 [implied Am]

Chromatic saturation in 2.5 mm.

10 D# F# A C# D

Schuld; so muss die Ra - che sich ent - zün - den.

Harsh chromaticism for "vengeance must be kindled."

D# dim.7 G# dim.7 C# dim.7 D minor D minor

The text paraphrases James 2:13: "Judgment like that of Sodom falls on the unmerciful (89/3). no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment" but also alludes to the Gospel reading.

### Aria. •Judgment like that of Sodom falls on the unmerciful (89/3).

89/3. 1. (Risoluto  $\text{♩} = 72$ .)

Ritornello (quasi ostinato bass) derived from vocal theme.

Continuo alone...

Compare subject in Fugue in G minor in Well-Tempered Clavier I.

[D minor] Quasi-ostinato bass employed segmentally. D minor F7

### 3 Alto.

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

Ein unbarm..

B-flat major F# dim.7 G7 A7 D minor D minor

### 5 II

her - ziges Ge - richte,

D minor F7 B-flat major F# dim.7

Overlapping entries of the headmotive reflect the inflexibility of the unforgiving disposition and the inevitability of judgment referenced in the text.

### 8

ein un\_barm - her - ziges Ge -

Head motive in diminution (up 8va)—see full score.

G7 A7 D minor D minor

Text painting: Wave-like melodic arches "will fall upon you."

### 10

rich - te wird ü - ber dich ge - wiss er - gehn, ein unbarm - her - ziges Ge -

D minor F major B-flat major F# dim.7 D7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

12

rich - te, — ein un - - - barm - her - zi - ges Ge - rich - te wird ü - ber

G minor G# dim.7 E7 A minor F major G# dim.7 A minor

14

dich ge - wiss er - gehn, — ein un - barm - her - zi -

C7 F major C# dim.7

16

ges Ge - rich - te wird ü - ber dich gewiss er - gehn!

D7 E7 A minor A minor F major E7

18

Die Ra - - - che fängt bei de - nen an,

Dramatic coloratura for "Rache" ("vengeance").

A minor C major

Descending (flat-ward) tonal sequence associated with downfall of Sodom: Am/CM-FM-Gm-Cm-A M.



J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

20

die Ra - - - - -

A longer melisma featuring 3 against 2 increases the tension.

C major C major

22

- - che fängt bei denen an, die nicht Barmherzigkeit ge -

C7 F major F7

24

than, die nicht Barmherzigkeit, Barmherzigkeit ge - than

D7 G minor G minor

26

und ma - chet sie wie So - - - - -

C7 D7 G minor G minor B-flat 7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

28

- - - - - dom ganz zu\_nich - te, und

E-flat major G7 C minor C minor E-flat 7

30

ma - chet sie\_wie So\_dom, wie So\_dom ganz zu\_nich - te.

A-flat major C7 F7 B dim.7 C minor

32

Greatly modified da capo (modulating back to D minor from C minor).

Ein un\_barm\_her\_zi-ges Ge\_rich\_te wird ü\_ber\_dich ge\_wiss er\_

C minor D7 G minor F major

34

geh'n, ein un\_barm\_her\_zi\_ges Ge\_

B-flat major F# dim.7 (A7) D minor

36

rich.te wird ü - ber dich ge - wiss er - gehn, ein un - barm - her - zi - ges Ge -

D minor D minor F# dim.7 G minor

38

rich.te wird ü - ber dich gewiss er - gehn!

G minor A7 D minor D minor D minor

Ritornello

40<sup>II</sup>

F7 B-flat major F# dim.7 G7 A7 D minor D minor

Secco

89/4. **Recitativo.** •Sins' debt forgiven in Jesus who is the end of the law (89/4).

Chromatic saturation  
in the vocal part in  
11 mm.

1. Soprano

Wohlan! mein Herze legt Zorn, Zank und Zwietracht hin; es ist bereit, dem

F major F# dim.7 G minor

4

Nächsten zu ver - ge - ben. Al - lein, wie schreckt mich mein sünden - volles

G B-flat 7 E-flat major E dim.7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

7

Le - ben, dass ich vor Gott in Schul - den bin! Doch Je - su

F minor B dim.7 C minor

9

Blut macht die - se Rechnung gut, wenn ich zu ihm, als des Ge - setzes En - de, mich

F# dim.7 D7 G minor B-flat major E-flat major

The reference to "Jesus as the end of the law" comes from Romans 10 (see note).

11

**Adagio.** (♩ = 50.)  
Arioso

gläu - big wen - - - - - de.

C7 B-flat major D7 G minor B-flat major E dim.7 F7 B-flat major

Word painting: Change to arioso with long melisma for "gläubig wende" ("turn [to Jesus] in faith").

**Aria.**

89/5. (Allegretto ♩ = 50.) • Sin's account paid by Jesus' drops of blood (89/5).

Ritornello (an ornamented version of the vocal line).

Oboe I

*mf* Ritornello

B-flat major B-flat major

Form (Rhyme: ABBACC)  
Ritornello (mm. 1-8) B M  
Lines 1-3 (9-23) B M-FM  
Rit (24-27) FM  
Line 4 (28-31) D7-Cm  
Rit (32-33) Cm  
Lines 5-6 (34-39) Cm-Gm  
Rit (40-43) Gm  
Lines 4-6 (44-51) F7-B M  
Rit (1-8) B M

4

B-flat major

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

8 **Soprano.** Lines 1-3.

Ge - rech - ter Gott, ach, rech - nest du?

B-flat major B-flat major

A dance-like theme with syllabically declaimed text suggests the image of "counting" referenced in the text and child-like confidence of reconciliation with God.

12

ge - rech - ter Gott, ach, rech - nest du, so wer - de ich - zum

B-flat major B-flat major

16

Heil der See - len die Trop - fen Blut von Je - su zäh - len, so

B-flat major F7 C7

20

wer - de ich zum Heil - der Seelen die Trop - fen Blut von Je - su zäh - len.

hemiola

F major F major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

24 Line 4.

Ach!

Ritornello

F major

F major

28

rech - ne mir die Sum - me zu, ach, rech - ne mir die Summe zu!

D7

C minor

C minor

32

Lines 5-6. Descending lines for "no one can fathom."

Ja, weil sie Nie - mand kann - er - gründen, be -

Ritornello

C minor

C minor

B-flat (7)

E-flat major

38

deckt sie mei - ne Schuld und Sün - den, be - deckt sie mei - ne Schuld -

F# dim.7

G minor

hemiola

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 89

39

— und Sün - den.

Ritornello

G minor G minor G7 G7 C major

42

Lines 4-6.

Before repeating lines 5 & 6, Bach goes back to line 4: "Ah, put to my account that sum [of droplets of Jesus' blood]." In this way, he emphasizes the doctrine of substitutionary atonement.

Ach! rech - ne mir die  
Ah, put-to-my account that

D7 G minor (F7)

45

Sum - me zu, ach, — rech - ne mir — die Sum - me — zu! Ja,

sum

B-flat major F pedal... B-flat major

48

weil\_ sie Nie - mand kann\_ er\_ gründen, be\_ deckt sie mei - ne Schuld und Sün\_ den.

hemiola

B-flat 7 B dim.7 C minor F7 B-flat major B-flat major

Dal Segno.

89/6. **Choral.** (Mel.: „Auf meinen lieben Gott.“) • Shortcomings acknowledged; adequacy in Christ's blood (89/6).

The chorale's harmonization is simple, without chromatic tension, suggesting a child-like faith.

Soprano. 1.  
+Ob I, II  
+Vln I

Alto.  
+Vln II

Tenore.  
+Vla

Basso.

Mir mangelt zwar sehr viel, doch was ich ha-ben will, ist

Mir mangelt zwar sehr viel, doch was ich ha-ben will, ist

Mir mangelt zwar sehr viel, doch was ich ha-ben will, ist

Mir mangelt zwar sehr viel, doch was ich ha-ben will, ist

Mir mangelt zwar sehr viel, doch was ich ha-ben will, ist

G minor D major D7 G minor D major

5

Al-les, mir zu gu-te, er-langt mit dei-nem Blu-te, da-

Al-les, mir zu gu-te, er-langt mit dei-nem Blu-te, da-

Al-les, mir zu gu-te, er-langt mit dei-nem Blu-te, da-

Al-les, mir zu gu-te, er-langt mit dei-nem Blu-te, da-

G minor B-flat major B-flat major G minor F7 B-flat major B-flat major

8

mit ich ü-ber-win-de Tod, Teu-fel, Höll' und Sün-de.

mit ich ü-ber-win-de Tod, Teu-fel, Höll' und Sün-de.

mit ich ü-ber-win-de Tod, Teu-fel, Höll' und Sün-de.

mit ich ü-ber-win-de Tod, Teu-fel, Höll' und Sün-de.

D major G minor C7 F major F7 D7 G minor G major

4 of the 5 enemies of Christ are mentioned (see note).

