

Worshipping God With Instruments

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Object: To instill in everyone a complete understanding of why instrumental music in worship to God is unscriptural under the new covenant and provide them with the information necessary to answer others who question them.

Introduction:

- A. Inevitably, when discussing Biblical teachings with someone, they will ask, “You must be a member of the church of Christ?”**
1. There are certain doctrinal issues that many in the religious world understands separates them from what we believe and practice
 2. There are two common responses which I receive from people when I tell them the congregation I identify with:
 - a. Some might say, “Aren’t yall the people who believe you have to be baptized?”
 - b. The other response, probably just as common, is “Aren’t yall the people who do not use instruments when you sing?”
 3. When someone responds with either there are two options for what will happen:
 - a. I can use this “door of opportunity” to talk to them about God’s word
 - b. Or I can find some way to avoid the issue or simply pass it off
- B. While I think most of the people who are here this morning agree that instrumental music in worship to God is not right, we still need to look at this subject:**
1. We need to be ready to answer people when they ask us about our faith: **(1 Pet. 3:15)**
 2. We also need to study this because it is in the lack of knowledge about what the Bible says about such issues that apostasy creeps in: **(Hosea 4:6)**

I. Before Going Any Further Let’s First Consider Some Common Misconceptions On This Subject:

- A. We Do Not Object To Its Use In Worship Because It Was NEVER Approved Of:**
1. Most “religious” people you will talk to about this subject understand that this is the case
 2. God not only approved but commanded their use under the Old Covenant:
 - a. The Lord commanded their use in the temples for worship **(2 Chron 29:25)**
 - b. Its seems that it is around this point that their use in worship became widespread
 - c. David **(Psalms 81:1-3; Psalms 150:3-5)**
 3. The fact that people run use the Old Testament to justify their use of instruments shows that they cannot find support for their use in the New Testament!
 4. If we decide to justify using instrumental music in worship today by what God commanded under the old covenant we have some problems:
 - a. If we go back to the Old Covenant to find and justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God then we should equally:
 - 1) Burning incense, daily animal sacrifices, feast days, the Sabbath, etc.
 - 2) Why are people not as willing to go back and practice ALL of these?
 - b. We cannot go back and pick and choose the parts of the Old Covenant we want to keep or what we find convenient – its all or none! **(Gal. 5:3)**
 - 5.. Going back to the Old Law for authorization for religious practices:
 - a. Going back to the law which Christ nailed to the cross **(Col 2:14; Heb 7:12)**
 - b. Thus it means rejecting Jesus Christ and what He has done for us!
 - c. Is very serious business! **(Gal. 5:4)**
- B. We Do Not Object To Its Use Because It Is Not Helpful or Does Not Sound Good:**
1. Some might think the objection to musical instruments is raised because we prefer the sound of accapella singing over singing with instruments:

- a. Most Christians enjoy music and listening to or even playing various instruments
- b. We might agree that having a piano or an organ in the background might help us stay together and on key as we sing
2. Just because something is helpful to the quality of sound that is produced does not mean that it is approved of by God or is even beneficial:
 - a. We would need to answer the question: “Are we adding their use to our worship to praise the Lord or because we like the sound of it”
 - b. What God wants from us is heart felt singing, not so much quality!

C. Some Might Say, “If They Are Used In Heaven, Surely God Approves of Them Here!”

1. The argument is sometimes made that Revelation talks about John hearing people playing instruments in Heaven; however, this is not the case: **(Rev. 14:2-4)**
 - a. The Lord, through John, was describing the sound John was hearing the very best way possible – The sound of the harp is supposed to be the most beautiful!
 - b. This is not describing an instrument actually being played but is rather describing the beautiful sound of their voices **(Note: NASV)**
2. Revelation also pictures people before the throne of God with harps: **(Rev. 5:8)**
 - a. If this is authorization then all of the other things mentioned here and elsewhere in Revelation should be part of NT worship when it’s not!
 - b. We need to remember that Revelation was written with many symbols **(Rev. 1:1)**
 - c. Are there elders in Heaven with literal bowls containing saints’ prayers?

II. Let’s Take A Historical Look Into The Use Of Instruments In Worshipping God:

A. Singing with the accompaniment of instruments was not part of the Christian’s worship in the First Century:

1. How can I know this for sure? I know this because the only thing mentioned which they did was sing! **(Eph 5:19; Col 3:16)**
 - a. There is never an instance where they are referred to as playing an instrument
 - b. While the O. T. has many references to them, the N.T. is silent to their use!
2. It is interesting to notice a word we commonly use: **ACAPPELLA**
 - a. Meaning: “Singing without instrumental accompaniment”
 - b. The word itself is a Latin word which originally meant, “The way the church sings”

B. If the Christians we read about in the Bible did not use them, when were they introduced?

1. Throughout the first few hundred years after the First Century musical instruments were never a part of the worship of Christians → In fact, in the writings of many during that time people took firm stands against them
2. Through history we learn that their use was introduced by the **Catholic Pope Vitalian** around **670 A.D.**
 - a. I find it interesting that of all the ways that religious people strayed away from God’s word, it took over 500 years for this one to take place
 - b. For a long time people understood and accepted the Bible’s simple teaching!
3. Around **775 A.D.** an organ was sent from the emperor **Constantine to Pepin**, King of the Franks, which was in turn used in worship
4. Over the next several hundred years instrumental music in worship gained more and more acceptance; however, it did not do quickly or without great controversy!
5. If they were approved of by God and used in the First Century why was it that their use is not even seen until at least the 7th Century, and even then and after it was a very controversial thing?

C. During the Reformation and the years following (when many of the denominations we see today were started) instrumental music began to be questioned:

1. Their founders urged their followers to reject their use in service to God!

2. **John Calvin (Presbyterian):** “Musical instruments... would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law... Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to Him.”
3. **John Wesley (Methodist):** “I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels provided they are neither heard nor seen.”
4. **Martin Luther (Lutheran)** referred to musical instruments as “an ensign of Baal”
5. **Charles Spurgeon (Prominent Baptist Preacher in 1800’s)** refused to allow instrumental music where he preached and said, “I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery”

D. Why is looking at the history of the musical instruments in worship important?

1. The church which Jesus built and the apostles taught did not utilize instruments in worship to God and it was not till hundreds of years later that it was brought in
2. Whenever men sought to rid the church of its doctrines of man they rid their worship of instrumental music! Returning to the pattern of the NT church meant doing away with instrumental music!
3. History affirms what the Bible, in its thunderous silence, says!

III. Why Is Using Instruments In Worship Such A Big Deal:

A. The issue simply boils down to an understanding for a need for authority in whatever we do in service to God → We live under Christ’s Authority! (Matt. 28:18)

1. Immediately after instructing the Colossians to sing with grace in their hearts, Paul instructs them that whatever they did had to have Christ’s authority behind it (**Col 3:17**)
 - a. **Illustration:** Police knock on the door: “Open up in the name of the law”
 - b. **Illustration:** Someone digging a hole in your backyard – your neighbors ask, “What are you doing?” The digger responds, “_____ told me to!”
2. Just because we may say we are doing something in the name of Jesus isn’t enough!
 - a. **Matthew 7:21ff**
 - b. Just saying, “Aaron told me to” isn’t good enough unless Aaron really told me to!
3. This principle of having authority for what we do applies to worshipping the Lord as well as it does any other practice: (**John 4:24**)

B. There is no authority to use instruments in worship because the Christians in the First Century are never spoken of as having used them!

1. Out of the eight passages in which we find Christians in the Bible worshipping God, all eight refer to vocal music → SINGING!
 - a. **Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; I Cor. 14:15; Eph 5:19; Col. 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; Hebrews 13:15; James 5:13**
 - b. There is NOT ONE passage that refers to Christians PLAYING praising God!
2. If a congregation is going to stake claim that they are trying to be just like the Christians and the church which we read about in the New Testament, they cannot use instrumental music in worship to God since there is no example of such!
4. Notice the word “Make Melody” in **Eph 5:19**
 - a. Some might object saying that this word gives authorization to play an instrument:
 - 1) First of all, notice that no instrument is included here or under discussion
 - 2) Secondly, realize that whatever this verse tells one person to do it commands EVERYONE to do; everyone would have to play an instrument when singing and anyone who didn’t would be sinning!
 - b. The word translated make melody here simply means “to pluck or twang”
 - 1) None of the translations I have found translate this word “PLAY”
 - 2) The passage itself puts parameters on the “instrument” God wants us to play → He wants us to praise Him with our voice from the heart!

- c. If you twist this passage to give authorization for using instrumental music, then the only instrument it could possibly authorize would be a STRINGED instrument!
- 5. We need to always be impressed here with what God wants from us in our singing:
 - a. Our singing needs to praise the Lord and teach and admonish one another
 - b. Our singing must be from the heart → Zealous and sung like we mean it!
 - c. Its not enough just to say, “I am making melody in my heart so I don’t have to sing with my voice” → God commanded us to use both!

C. The Silence of The Scriptures Does Not Give Us Permission To Do As We Please:

- 1. Some might defend their use by saying, “But God never said you couldn’t use them!”
 - a. When the Bible is silent about using a particular thing we must not understand that as being blanket consent for practicing it! (2 John 9 – “goes beyond”)
 - b. What if the Bible stated every specific thing we couldn’t do that would arise?
- 2. When the Lord **SPECIFIED** which type of music He wanted in worship to Him, He thus **EXCLUDED** any other type of music!
- 3. The Hebrew writer argues this same point (Hebrews 7:11-16)
 - a. Because God specified from which tribes the priest was to come – they could not raise a priest from any other tribes
 - b. Even though Moses spoke nothing about it being wrong to have a priest from the tribe of Judah, the Hebrew writer shows that it was wrong!
 - c. If the silence of God was permissive, there would have been no need to change the priesthood! Since it’s not permissive then the priesthood had to change!
- 4. **CHART: SPECIFIC → EXCLUSION (Mike Willis – “Passing The Torch)**

D. Using instrumental music in worship is not an aid but an addition:

- 1. Someone who has already wrestled with the subject of instrumental music in worship might object: “But you use songbooks, song leaders, and even a pitch pipe – none of these are mentioned in the Bible!”
 - a. Songbooks, song leaders, and pitch-pipes are all aides to carrying out a command of the Lord in the manner in which He commanded us to carry it out
 - b. The introduction of another kind of music than singing is not an aid, it’s an addition!
- 3. How is an aid different from an addition?
 - a. An aid alters nothing, but merely facilitates what is being done
~ **WITHOUT CHANGING ANYTHING!**
 - b. An addition occurs when what is being done is altered or its substance is changed
- 4. In order for something to actually be an aid it first cannot contradict what has been specifically stated, must be helpful, and the activity which it is aided must be scriptural
- 5. **NADAB AND ABIHU:**
 - a. Just ask them how God feels about adding to God’s commands (Lev. 10:1)
 - b. Notice their punishment!!! (vs. 2) – **GOD IS SERIOUS!**
- 6. **CHART: Aids and Additions or Changes**

CONCLUSION:

- A. In defense of the use of musical instruments in worship there are three arguments never made:
 - 1. There is a direct command of God in the NT for their use
 - 2. There is an approved example of Christians using them to worship God
 - 3. Their use is necessarily implied somewhere in the New Testament
- B. In spite of all the evidence and scriptures against the use of instrumental music in worship to the Lord under the New Covenant, there are some who are bent on using them anyways!