

Instrumental Music In Worship

Part 1 - Instrumental Music and the Authority of the Scriptures

By Wayne Wells

When many first hear there are some churches which do not use instrumental music in their service, they often think it is a little strange. Instrumental music is so prevalent among modern churches that the vast majority have never experienced religious services without it. Although its use is widespread, most don't realize when or how it became accepted among the various denominations. Historically, instrumental music did not become a common practice in the Roman Catholic Church until the Middle Ages and it was not accepted by the Protestants until the mid to late 1800's. The Bible does not give any explicit commands for Christians concerning the use of instruments in music. There is no passage that plainly says, "Thou shalt use instrumental music in worship" or, "Thou shalt not use instrumental music in worship." Since instruments in worship are neither openly commanded nor condemned, does it make any difference whether we use them or not? Is the use of instrumental music a matter of doctrine or opinion?

The Real Issue Is Not The Instruments Themselves, But Our View Towards the Authority of the Scriptures



We need to be careful to respect the will of God for our lives. When God has given us freedom to choose in certain areas, we should respect everyone's freedom to express their personal judgment in those areas. When God has expressed His desired will on any subject, we must be careful to follow His will rather than our own. According to Jesus, our salvation is dependent on whether or not we are submissive to the will of God. We must pay close attention to the warning He gave in the Sermon on the Mount.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say

to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23)

The word "lawlessness" (iniquity - KJV) is translated from "anomia." It is defined as "the condition of without law" and is also used in the following verses:

"Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:40-42)

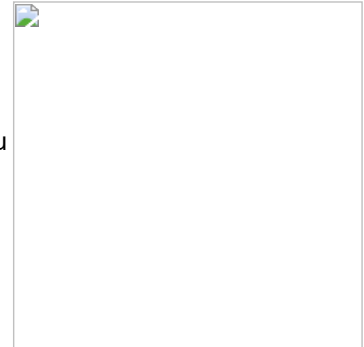
"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matthew 23:27-28)

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4)

The sin of lawlessness includes going beyond what has been delivered from God. In 1 Kings 12:25-33, we can read how Jeroboam was guilty of lawlessness when he changed the worship of Israel. This rebellion against God eventually led to the downfall of Israel. Jeroboam established new priests, new feast days, and a new location for worship. God did not command any of these things, but 1 Kings 12:33 tells us that Jeroboam devised these things in his own heart. God did not specifically tell Jeroboam *not* to do any of these things. Instead, Jeroboam was supposed to obey what God had already commanded concerning worship. Because of Jeroboam's lawlessness, God rejected him and eventually destroyed his family. It makes no difference whether we live under the Old or the New Covenant, we must follow God's instructions if we are to be pleasing to Him. In 2 John 9, we are warned, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." This warning is just as true today as the day it was first written.

There is a growing tendency in churches to discount the importance of following God's will exactly as He revealed it. Some say it doesn't really matter. They say things like, "I can take it or leave it, it doesn't matter to me." When people talk like this, they are really saying, "I am not that concerned about what the Bible teaches or Bible authority or God's will."

In Matthew 21:23, the chief priests and the elders came to Jesus while He was teaching in the Temple and asked Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" Jesus did not rebuke their concern for the need of the proper authority. He recognized that these men were not interested in knowing the truth so He answered their question with a question. In the next two verses, Jesus replied saying, "I will ask you one thing too, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" Jesus understood that there were only two possible answers for the source of John's baptism. Either it was commanded by God or it was devised in the heart of man. Everything people do in their religious service falls under one of these two categories. Either God commanded it or man invented it.



The question those who use instrumental music must answer is, "By what authority are you doing these things?" The burden is not on those who *do not* practice something but on those who *do* practice it. They are the ones who must give answer to man and God.

When we baptize one into Jesus, what authority do we have?

When we take the Lord's Supper, what authority do we have?

When we collect or spend money, what authority do we have?

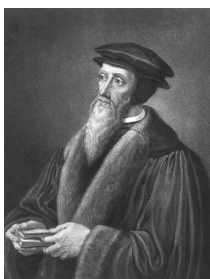
If we use instrumental music, what authority do we have?

We should be able to give book, chapter, and verse in God's Word to establish the authority for anything we are doing in our worship to God. If no scriptural authority can be found, the practice must be given up. To do something without Biblical authority is to ignore the will of God. Scriptural authority can easily be provided to prove it is right to baptize a person in Jesus and to observe the Lord's Supper. There are many passages available to instruct us concerning the collection of money and the manner in which it is to be spent by the church. Those who use instrumental music in worship to God must provide the passage where God told us that this is what He desires.

Biblical Authority Was the Central Issue of the Protestant Reformation.

In the 1500's, a religious movement known as the Protestant Reformation was begun. The goal of the Reformation movement was to reform a corrupt Catholic church. Three of the most important leaders of this movement were John Calvin, Huldreich Zwingli and Martin Luther. They took the position that proper authority comes from God alone. The position of the Roman Catholics was that authority comes not only from God, but also from church tradition, church laws and the Pope. This was the major issue of the Reformation. There were many different religious disagreements and conflicts between the Catholics and Protestants, but the central issue was the desire of the Protestants to turn to the Bible for their authority and the willingness of the Catholics to allow the Pope and church hierarchy to make rules for them to follow.

The Protestants developed two different views towards Biblical authority.



1. The view of Calvin and Zwingli. Calvin and Zwingli took the position that we can only do what the Bible teaches and we are not to go beyond what is written. They expressed their position by teaching, "Only that which the Bible commands or for what distinct authorization can be found in its pages is binding or allowable." In other words, they taught that we can do only that which the Bible authorizes us to do.

This is the Biblical position. It is not the correct position because Calvin and Zwingli taught it, but because it is the position taught by the Bible itself in both the Old and New Testament.

"You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." (Deuteronomy 4:2)

"So you shall observe to do just as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left." (Deuteronomy 5:32)

"Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it." (Deuteronomy 12:32)

"Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go." (Joshua 1:7)

"Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words Lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar." (Proverbs 30:5-6)

"But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8-9)

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Colossians 3:17)

"Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (Hebrews 8:5)

"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11)

"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9)

"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book." (Revelation 22:18-19)

In June or July, 1524, images, relics and instrumental music were removed from the Reformed churches of Germany because there was no authority for them in God's Word. Singing without instrumental music was the practice of all the churches in the Reformation movement with the exception of the Church of England.



2. The view of Martin Luther . Martin Luther had another view towards Bible authority. He believed that whatever is not forbidden in the Bible is permissible. His position could be summed up by, "If the Bible doesn't say you can't, then you can. There is nothing wrong with a practice as long as the Bible does not say you can't." The reason Luther took this position was that he also believed in infant baptism. The Bible does not say you can't baptize infants, but the Bible does not authorize it either.

Nearly every denomination today follows Luther's view towards authority. If you talk about instrumental music to most people today, the first response you will most likely get is, "The Bible doesn't say you can't!"

How We Establish Bible Authority is the Central Issue Concerning Instrumental Music

The two views taken are that either we can only do that which the Bible authorizes or we can do anything the Bible does not specifically forbid. Which one is based on the teachings of the Bible?

If we take the position that we can do anything as long as the Bible doesn't say we can't, then on what basis can any of these things be opposed?

Burn incense or candles during worship

Have a Pope, Archbishops, Cardinals

Using Water in the Lord's Supper rather than Fruit of the Vine

Praying through Mary

Infant Baptism

Instrumental Music

The only way any of these things can be opposed Biblically is by acknowledging the fact that the Bible tells us what God wants, which excludes everything else.

Concerning incense and candles, the Bible is completely silent. To add them to our religious service would be adding to the Word of God. The Bible does not say we can't use incense and candles in our worship, but neither does it instruct us to use them. The use of incense and candles are from what source, from heaven or from men?

The Bible doesn't specifically say that we are not to have church government like the Catholic hierarchy of the Pope, Archbishops and Cardinals. The Bible does provide instructions concerning the organization of the local church under elders and deacons. If we alter the pattern of church government revealed in the Bible, we are putting our views and desires above God's will. Although the Bible may not specifically say we can't have Archbishops and Cardinals, where does it say we can?

We are instructed to use unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine for the Lord's Supper. To water rather than fruit of the vine (as the Mormon's practice) or any other substitute would be going beyond what is written, although the Bible does not say you can't use water rather than fruit of the vine.

The only way we can Biblically oppose the practice of praying to God through Mary is by showing how the Bible instructs us to pray through Jesus. The Bible does not say we can't pray through Mary, but it does tell us to pray through Jesus. In John 14:13-14, Jesus told His disciples, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

In the Scriptures, we are instructed to baptize believers who are repentant. We are never told not to baptize infants, we are simply told who we are to baptize. If someone wanted to baptize their pet, no one could point to a passage that commands us not to baptize cats and dogs. The only way we could prevent Christians from getting involved in such foolishness is to teach we must practice only that for which we have authority.

This same principle applies to the use of instrumental music. The Bible does not say that we can't use instruments. God simply told us what kind of music we are to be making when He told us to be, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" and to be, "singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16)

Where does the Bible say you can't?

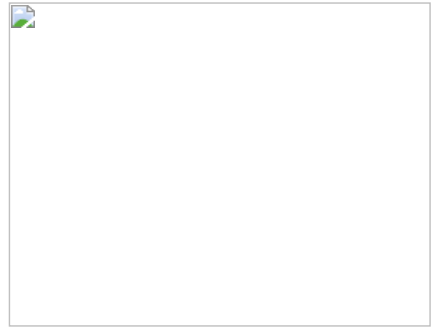


1. Priests were to be taken only from the tribe of Levi. God never said Israel could not have priests from the tribe of Judah. God *did* tell them He wanted the priests taken from the tribe of Levi. Hebrews 7:14 tells us, "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, *of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.*" God didn't say one from the tribe of Judah couldn't be a priest. He just said that priests were to be taken from the tribe of Levi. By giving this command, all Israelites who were not Levites were excluded from the priesthood.

2. Moses was not told he couldn't hit the rock. In Numbers 20:7, God gave some specific instructions to Moses when He said, "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink." We could make a long list of things the Lord did not tell Moses *not* to do. The most important thing to notice is that God did not tell Moses not to strike the rock. God *did* tell Moses to take his rod, assemble the people, and speak to the rock. Moses took his rod, assembled the people and struck the rock. Remember, God never told Moses *not* to strike the rock! He was not given the authority *to* strike it either.

What was God's reaction when Moses struck the rock without having the proper authority? In Numbers 20:12,

God told Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." Moses was trying to play God. He lifted up his will to be equal or greater than the revealed will of God. This is what anyone does when they do anything other than what God commands. Moses did not treat God as holy. Holiness includes the idea of separateness. God is separate. He is in a class all by Himself. We can not treat God's Words lightly. His Words are to be more special to us than any other words in existence. Moses sinned because he was willing to add to God's Word, and as a result, he was not able to enter the promised land.



The apostle Paul reminded the early Christians to pay close attention to these examples when he wrote, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction" (Romans 15:4), and "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction" (1 Corinthians 10:11).



THE SIN OF NADAB AND ABIHU.—LEV. X. 1-2.

3. The example of Nadab and Abihu. In Leviticus 10, we are given another example that demonstrates the need of following God's commands exactly as He delivered them. There we are told, "Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord." (Leviticus 10:1-2) In the very next verse, Moses told Aaron, "It is what the Lord spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.'"

Nadab and Abihu did not treat God as holy. They were careless with His words and added to them. Nadab and Abihu were from the proper tribe (the Levites), they had authority to offer incense, they used the right incense and the right fire pan, but the wrong fire. Just one seemingly insignificant violation brought swift destruction upon them. No one is allowed to lift up their desires or opinions above the authority of God's Word.

Notice what God said about Himself in the Scriptures:

"I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another" (Isaiah 42:8)

"For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; for how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another." (Isaiah 48:11)

God will not share His glory with any other. Only He is the Creator, only He is the Almighty, only He is the Holy One. For man to exalt his desires above God's Word, is to try to share in God's glory.

4. The example of Uzziah. In the beginning of his reign, King Uzziah did right in the sight of the Lord. God blessed him because of his faithfulness and he became very successful. Although there was much good in the life of King Uzziah, in 2 Chronicles 26:16-20, we can read of King Uzziah being punished by God for offering incense in the Temple. The Law of Moses never stated that a king could not be a priest. It never said a king could not offer incense. The Law *did* state that offering incense was the job of the priest. For anyone, including the king, to go beyond that was to act without authority from God.



When Uzziah became strong and proud, he acted corruptly and was unfaithful to the Lord (2 Chronicles 26:16). How did he become corrupt and unfaithful? He did something which he was not authorized to do. He decided to play God and make up his own rules. The Bible did not say he couldn't offer incense, but he was not told that he *could* either. The priests tried to warn him by saying, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful, and will have no honor from the Lord God" (2 Chronicles 26:18). Instead of repenting of his lawlessness, Uzziah became enraged with the obvious attitude, "I am going to do it anyway!" God immediately struck him with leprosy and he remained a leper until the day of his death.

The need to follow God's instructions carefully can be illustrated from modern life. If you ordered a shirt from a department store, and they added a belt, a tie, and a pair of shoes and charged you for them, would you pay them? What if you told the store manager that you didn't order these things and he replied, "You did not tell us we *couldn't* send these other items also." Would you be satisfied with this reasoning? Do you think God is pleased when man treats His Word in the same careless and disrespectful manner?

What if a young man asked his father if he could borrow the car to go to a friend's house to study? He finally returns at 5 a.m. and his father asks him where he has been. He replies that he went to a friend's house to study, but then four other friends came over and they all took the car to another town fifty miles away. The father didn't say he *couldn't* go out of town after he finished studying! Do you think the father would be impressed by this kind of reasoning? If the boy's father can expect his words to be followed closer than that, how much more should God be able to expect *us* to carefully follow His commands?

The Need of Obedience Is Also Taught in the New Testament

Although the covenants were changed by the coming of Christ, God's attitude towards those who add to or take away from His Word has not changed. If we try to change His Word, we are still saying that our authority is above God's.



In Mark 7, Jesus severely rebuked the scribes and Pharisees. They were worshipping God, but it was vain worship, because they were practicing that which God had not commanded. These men asked Jesus, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?" (Mark 7:5). Notice how they were concerned about observing the tradition of the elders. They had invented a set of rules which included the need of washing hands before eating. There is nothing wrong in washing hands before eating, but it becomes very wrong when one requires it as service to God when God has not commanded it. By doing this, man is claiming to have the authority to set up the rules.

Jesus rebuked them by saying, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7:6-8).

Even as small a matter as washing hands can cause one's worship to be vain. Instead of following God's rules, they were elevating their own ideas above the Scriptures and were rejected. Their washing was being done on man's authority instead of God's.

We Must Live by Faith to be Pleasing to God

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

"But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin." (Romans 14:23)

To live by true faith, we must be following the Word of God. As Romans 10:17 teaches us, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." If God's Word does not teach something, it cannot be done by true Biblical faith, it can only be done by our own will. This is serious. Anyone who uses instrumental music does so without authority from God.

What God Authorizes Us To Do

1. We are to sing with the spirit.

"What is the result then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:15)

Does the phrase "sing with the spirit" authorize playing instrumental music? If it does, can we pray with instruments since we are also told to "pray with the spirit"?

2. We are to make melody in our hearts.

"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:19)

We are to speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Instruments cannot speak or sing.

The phrase "make melody" is from the Greek word "psallo" and is to be done "in your hearts." Nothing is said about making a melody on an instrument.



Some claim that "psallo" means playing a stringed instrument. It could mean this during the time of classical Greek, but Paul made it plain where the melody is to be played. The only melody mentioned is the one that is to be in our heart.

Some have claimed that "psallo" means one must play an instrument to follow this. If so, everyone must play. This view would turn the congregation into an orchestra since everyone is commanded to make a melody. Also, if this view was correct, anyone who didn't know how to play an instrument would not be able to obey this command.

The Greek Orthodox do not use instruments. This was one of the issues that caused them to divide from the Roman Catholics in 1054. Do the Greeks not understand their own language?

Everyone can make a melody in their hearts regardless of their knowledge of music. This is what God revealed that He desires. If we make melody on an instrument, we are adding to what God commanded.

We are to make melody "to the Lord." Contrary to the practice of many modern churches, this is not an activity that we engage in to entertain ourselves or please ourselves, it is to the Lord. It is up to God to tell us what He wants and what pleases Him. We must have the attitude of the apostle Paul when he wrote, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

Some argue that Ephesians 5:19 does not apply to the assembly. They are right. It is a broad statement. It does not matter whether we are assembling with other Christians, or in school or in our home. There is never a time when the Christian is authorized to play an instrument to God. This is broader than the assembly. It covers any time we might be involved in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. We need to be consistent and always apply this passage. We must always remember that it is the Lord we are to serve and please, not ourselves.

3. We are to sing with grace in our hearts.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16).

This passage reveals three specific things that God wants us to accomplish with our music. He wants us to teach, admonish, and sing with grace in our hearts. Each one of these commands can only be followed with our voices. Instruments cannot teach, admonish nor sing with grace. To add instrumental music to our worship to God is to add another kind of music that God has not authorized.

As long as we practice what the Bible says, there is no disagreement that we are doing what is right. Everyone can see that the Bible teaches Christians to be "speaking to one another" and to be "making melody in your hearts." Christians are to be "teaching and admonishing one another" and to be "singing with grace in your hearts." None of these points are debated by anyone. The disagreement comes when people try to add instrumental music to God's commands. This is where we can see that the real issue is not instrumental music, but our view towards the authority of the Word of God. Do we want to follow exactly what the Lord commands, or are we free to add our own ideas to what He has revealed?

If we are serious about not adding to the Scriptures, those who use instrumental music in their worship must find a passage that authorizes their practice. Until that passage is found, the question must still be asked, "Instrumental music is from what source, from heaven or men?"

Some Argue that Instrumental Music is an Aid to Our singing, not an addition to God's commands

An aid can only be an aid as long as it does not change or add to the nature or action of what is being done. One example would be the use of communion ware commonly used by churches. It does not matter if we use silver, aluminum, gold or paper plates to pass out the unleavened bread. The plates and trays are merely an aid to carry out the Lord's commands to eat and drink the bread and fruit of the vine in remembrance of Him.

When a teacher or preacher uses a microphone, it does not change the nature of the obedience to God's commands concerning teaching. The correct teaching can still be accomplished although the sound volume may be aided by new technology. Songbooks do not change the fact that we are singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord. The action is still the same, although we might use an aid to enable us to better carry out the Lord's commands. Instrumental music is not a mere aid but an *addition*. God told us how He wants us to make music. We are to "make melody with your heart". When we add instruments, instead of aiding the melody in our hearts, we are adding another melody of a different kind. *Aids* to following God's commands are not sinful, but God has always rejected *additions* to His commands.

What would happen if someone wanted to serve roasted lamb during the Lord's Supper to help us remember that Jesus is the true Lamb of God? Would this be an aid or an addition? God commanded what He wants us to use to remember the sacrifice of the Lord. He commanded us to use unleavened bread, and to change from bread to lamb would be an addition to God's law rather than an aid. Using lamb to remember Jesus being the Lamb of God might seem like a good idea to us. The Bible doesn't say we *can't* do this! The Bible *does* tell us what to use and to use any other kind of food not authorized by God would be lawlessness, or without law.

To use instruments in worship to God, we must find the passage that authorizes it, or admit that we are practicing that for which there is no law. Worshipping God without law is what the Bible calls lawlessness or iniquity.

Some claim that Since Instruments were Used During the Old Covenant, we can Use them in Worship Today

Those who want to justify the use of instrumental music today continually go to the Old Testament for their justification. Below are some of the passages used to show that instruments were used by the Jews during the Old Covenant.



"Then Hezekiah commanded them to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord also began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel. So all the congregation worshipped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished." (2 Chronicles 29:27-28)

"Four thousand were gatekeepers, and four thousand praised the Lord with musical instruments, 'which I made,' said David, 'for giving praise.'" (1 Chronicles 23:5)

"Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; And on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God." (Psalms 43:4)

"Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!" (Psalms 150:3-4)

The Jews used instruments because God commanded them to be used. In 2 Chronicles 29:25, we can read how Hezekiah stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres. He did this because, "the command was from the Lord through His prophets." Hezekiah would have been wrong if he had not followed the Lord's commands. Some reason that since "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), then we can worship with instruments because their use was commanded in the past. We must understand that God the Father and Jesus do not change, but the covenants have changed!

We cannot go to the Old Covenant for our authority in worship today. The book of Galatians was written to Christians who were trying to bind circumcision on those who would approach God. Although circumcision was

required by God in the Old Covenant, to require it today is to fall from grace. Paul wrote, "Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:2-4)

There are many other practices in the Old Covenant that we do not follow today. No one has any trouble understanding that we no longer have cities of refuge today, although they were commanded for the Israelites. The church no longer practices animal sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood or physical warfare. We understand how all these have changed because of the change in the covenants. Why can't we as easily see that it is just as wrong to go back to the Old Testament for our authority for instrumental music as it would be to try to justify any of these other practices in the Old Testament for the church today?

Although it is clear that the Jews used instruments, the New Testament tells us how we are to be worshipping God today. In Hebrews 13:15, we are told, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." If we offer the fruit of our lips, we know we are doing right. The Bible does not say, "Thou shalt not use the instrument!" just as God did not tell Nadab and Abihu which fire not to offer or tell Moses not to hit the rock. God just tells us what He wants us to do.

Today, God is telling us through the New Testament that He wants us to be "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:16-17).

To "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" is to do all by His authority. We must be able to prove by Scripture what we do and practice. There is not one word said about instrumental music used in the worship of Christians. The only way we can do it is to add it on our own authority and play God.

We must always be careful to do only what our Lord authorizes. The warning of Jesus still stands:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23)

To paraphrase the question that Jesus asked the Pharisees, "The use of instrumental music in the church is from what source, from heaven or from men?" If from heaven, please give the passage. If from men, please stop practicing lawlessness.

[Instrumental Music In Worship - Part 2](#)

[Home](#)