



Music to His Ears

A Study of Music in Worship

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God's Word is the Final Authority

Principles of Biblical Interpretation:

- Direct command or statement (John 8:24; Matthew 28:19).
- Approved Example (I Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17).
- Forced Conclusion (Acts 8:35-38; Matthew 22:29-32, 41-45).

God's Word is the Final Authority

- ***Principles of Biblical Interpretation:***
 - In the absence of a command, example or forced conclusion the silence of the scriptures is prohibitive (Hebrews 7:11-14).
 - A generic command may permit liberties, whereas, a specific command eliminates other options.

God's Word is the Final Authority

- ***Principles of Biblical Interpretation:***
 - Distinction between “aid” (pitch pipe) and “addition” (instrument) – one changes the act of worship and the other does not.
 - Recognize the distinction between the Old Testament and New Testament (Galatians 3:23-25; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 8:6-13).

Did God Authorize Musical Instruments in Worship in the O.T.?

- **The first instruction God gave Israel for instruments in worship is found in Numbers 10:1-10.**
 - Notice how specific and explicit God's instructions are – this not some nebulous and ambiguous issue for Israel.
 - Specific instruments – two silver trumpets.
 - Specific persons that were to use them.
 - Specific manner and time of their use.

Did God Authorize Musical Instruments in Worship in the O.T.?

- David’s plans for the Tabernacle were “*according to the word of the Lord*” (I Chronicles 15:15b; 16:6).**
- David’ plans for Solomon’s Building of the Temple were according to the divine pattern (I Chronicles 28:13,19).**

Did God Authorize Musical Instruments in Worship in the O.T.?

- **Hezekiah's Restoration of God' Worship (2 Chronicles 29:25).**
 - Specific persons – Levites and Priests (25).
 - Specific means (26).
 - Specific purpose (27-28).
 - We see the same sort of thing with the restoration efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Lessons To Learn From the O.T. Worship

- **Musical instruments were specifically authorized by God.**
 - Their use was not left up to the discretion of the people.
 - Their use was the result of God's directions.

Lessons To Learn From the O.T. Worship

- For the first four hundred years of Israel's history all they used in tabernacle worship were the two silver trumpets.
- Why did they use them? Because God told them to!
- Why did they not use other instruments at that time? Because there was no authorization from God to do so.
- For the next thousand years of history Israel only used what David had commanded.
- Why did David give them additional instruments? Because God commanded it.

Lessons To Learn From the O.T. Worship

With such a clear emphasis on the command of God as the reason to use instruments, the obvious question for us in the New Testament is, *‘Has God given us instructions in the New Testament when we assemble to worship regarding the use of instruments in our worship?’*”

New Testament Worship

Argument:

“If they were used in the Old Testament, it can be assumed that it is o.k. whether it is mentioned in the New Testament or not.”

New Testament Worship

- Yet when you recognize the distinctions in the Old and New Testaments (*which we have already discussed*) this is a failing argument.
- Additionally, when one considers how closely instrumental music was connected to the tabernacle/temple this is a poor assumption.

New Testament Worship

- Under the New Covenant, worship was not in a centralized location and it was not to possess ceremonial rituals, but was “in spirit” (spiritual versus carnal) and “in truth” (John 4:21-24).
- David commanded the use of musical instruments as an inherent part of the Levitical Priesthood (I Chronicles 16:4-6; 23:1-5).
- When the priesthood is taken away, so must be all of its functions, including its use of musical instruments in the worship of God (Hebrews 7:11-14; 8:1-5, 13; 9:8-14).

New Testament Worship

The New Testament Pattern: Singing

Specific command/practice:

- “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God...” (Acts 16:25).
- “...I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding” (I Cor. 14:15).

New Testament Worship

The New Testament Pattern: Singing

Specific command/practice:

- “But be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father” (Eph. 5:18b-19).
- “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16). *(See also Hebrews 2:12)*

New Testament Worship

Argument:

“Does the verb *‘Psallo’* translating *‘make melody’* and the noun *‘Psalmos’* translating *‘psalm’* in Ephesians 5:19 justify instrumental music in worship?”

New Testament Worship

- **What does the word *psallo* translating “make melody” mean?**
 - The term passed through very clear changes in its meaning throughout the centuries of the Old Testament and up to the time of the apostles – the change was from “play” to “play and sing” to “only sing.”

New Testament Worship

What does the word *psallo*, translating “make melody” mean?

How was it used in the first century when Paul used the term?

- **5567** ψάλλω [*psallo* /*psal-lo*/] 2d in the NT to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song.
- **[6010]** ψάλλω *psallō* ... in NT to sing praises, Rom 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph 5:19; Jas 5:13* [5567] See sing.

New Testament Worship

What does the word *psallo*, translating “make melody” mean?

- When Paul admonished the Ephesians to “make melody in their heart” he was specifying the instrument of their praise, i.e. “heart.”
- The New Testament always translates the term as “sing.”
- The participial form of the verb retains the imperative character of the main verb, “be filled with the Spirit” (18). This means that it carries the force of a command.

New Testament Worship

What does the word *psallo*, translating “make melody” mean?

- If it means “play an instrument” then that would mean all praise would have to be instrumental and every Christian would have to use an instrument.
- This is just not a tenable interpretation and to force such a definition damages the immediate context and ignores the remote context of the entire New Testament.

New Testament Worship

What does the word *psalmos*, translating “psalm” mean?

The argument is that since the “psalms” mention instrumental music and Christians are to sing “psalms” it must be permissible to use instruments in worship..

New Testament Worship

What does the word *psalmos* translating “*psalm*” mean?

Since the psalms were the hymnal of Israel and Israel lived under a different covenant we would expect that not everything in the psalms would be applicable to us.

Historical Record

- *Clement of Alexandria (150 AD)*
- *Justin Martyr (150 AD)*
- *Origen (200 AD)*
- *Methodius (250 AD)*
- *Eusebius (300 AD)*
- *Basil of Caesarea (330 AD)*
- *John Chrysostom (350 AD)*

- *Cyril of Jerusalem (350 AD)*
- *Athanasius (350 AD)*
- *Isadore of Pelusium (400 AD)*
- *Apostolic Constitutions (400 AD)*
- *Jerome (400 AD)*
- *Augustine (400 AD)*

Historical Record

**James McKinnon states,
“The antagonism which the
fathers of the early church
displayed toward instruments has
two outstanding characteristics:
vehemence and uniformity.”**

Historical Record

- **“Instrumental music had no place in the early churches” (Girardeau).**
- **“There is no instrumental accompaniment” (Church Music, Edmund Lorenz).**

Historical Record

Justin Martyr (100-165): “The use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches as it was among the Jews in their infant state, but only the plain use of song...Musical organs pertain to the Jewish ceremonies and agree no more to us than circumcision”

Historical Record

Clement of Alexandria (150-215):
“Leave the pipe to the shepherd, the flute to the men who are in fear of gods and are intent on their idol-worshipping. Such musical instruments must be excluded...”

Historical Record

Origen (185-254): “...The musical instruments of the Old Covenant understood spiritually are applicable to us...He who makes melody with the mind makes melody well, speaking spiritual songs and singing in his heart to God”

Historical Record

Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (260-339):

“When formerly the people of the circumcision worshipped through symbols and types, it was not unreasonable that they raised hymns to God on psalteries...we however...in spiritual songs that we render the hymn...”

Historical Record

Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (260-339):

“...And so more sweetly pleasing to God than any musical instrument would be the symphony of the people of God, by which , in every church of God with kindred spirit and single disposition, with one mind ... we raise melody in unison...”

Historical Record

Professor Girardeau writes:

“There is no evidence but the contrary to show that instrumental music was commonly introduced into the church until the thirteenth century. The church, although lapsing more and more into defection from the truth and into corruption of apostolic practice, had no instrumental worship for 1200 years.”

Historical Record

- It was during the dark ages of the 14th and 15th centuries that the organ gained prominence in the worship of the Roman Catholic Church.
- “In spite of the opposition, the organ during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, steadily made its way onward toward universal triumph in the Roman Catholic Church” (Girardeau).

Historical Record

McClintock and Strong state: “Students of ecclesiastical archaeology are generally agreed that instrumental music was not used in churches till a much later date; for Thomas Aquinas, A.D. 1250, has these remarkable words:

‘Our church does not use musical instruments...to praise God...that she may not seem to Judaize.’”

Historical Record

"Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists therefore, have foolishly borrowed, this, as well as many other things, from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostles is far more pleasing to him. Paul allows us to bless God in the public assembly of the saints, only in a known tongue (I Cor. 14:16)

"I have no objection to instruments of music in our worship, provided they are neither seen nor heard." – John Wesley

"I am an old man, and I here declare that I never knew them to be productive of any good in the worship of God, and have reason to believe that they are productive of much evil. Music as a science I esteem and admire, but instrumental music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and I here register my protest against all such corruption of the worship of the author of Christianity . . ." – Adam Clarke

Historical Record

We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it... Israel was at school, and used childish things to help her to learn; but in these days when Jesus gives us spiritual food, one can make melody without strings and pipes... We do not need them. That would hinder rather than help our praise. Sing unto him. This is the sweetest and best music. No instrument is like the human voice."

(Charles Spurgeon (Baptist), Commentary on Psalm 42.)

Historical Record

- The Puritans unanimously opposed instrumental music in worship to God as the New Testament Church.
- Numbers of Baptist Theologians opposed instrumental music in the 18th and 19th Centuries.
- “Some of the arguments in support of the organ included its rising popularity among the churches, its appeal to the younger members and supposed usefulness in evangelism” (Referencing Baptist Church).

Historical Record

- Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) [Leading Baptist Theologian of the 19th Century]: “Of priests, altars, sacred garments, and instrumental music in Christian worship, the New Testament ‘said nothing.’ Is it improper then to infer that no such things were known in the times of the first Christians? Instrument music, the more I think of it, appears with increasing evidence to be utterly unsuited to the genius of the gospel dispensation...”

Historical Record

“...There was a glare, if I may so express it, which characterized even the divine appointments of Judaism. An august Temple, ornamented with gold and silver, and precious attire, trumpets, cymbals, harps; all of which were adapted to an age and dispensation when the church was in a state of infancy. But when the substance is come, it is time that the shadows flee away.”

Historical Record

John L. Dagg (1799-1884) was one of the most respected Baptist theologians during the 19th Century. In his Manual of Theology he wrote, *“Instrumental music formed a part of the temple worship, but it is nowhere commanded in the New Testament; and it is less adapted to the more spiritual services of the present dispensation.”*

Historical Record

“Christ and his apostles ordained the musical worship of the New Dispensation without any sort of musical instrument, enjoining only the singing with the voice of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Hence such instruments are excluded from Christian worship. Such has been the creed of all churches and in all ages except the Popish communion after it had reached the nadir of its corruption”

(Robert L. Dabney, Southern Presybyterian).

Historical Record

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones wrote the following: “Nothing is needed more urgently than an analysis of the innovations in the realm of religious worship in the nineteenth century—to me in this respect a devastating century. The sooner we forget the nineteenth century and go back to the eighteenth, and even further to the seventeenth and sixteenth century, the better. The nineteenth century and its mentality and outlook is responsible for most of our troubles and problems today...”

Historical Record

“...It was then that a fatal turn took place in so many respects, as we have been seeing, and very prominent among the changes introduced was the place given to music in various forms...”

Grace and Judgment



1599

Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water; and people were constantly coming to be baptized. ²⁴(This was before John was put in prison.) ²⁵His disciples were developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew. ²⁶They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—well, he is beginning everyone is going to him, and he can receive only what is sent down from heaven." ²⁷You testify that I said Christ^s but am sent as the bridegroom. The friend who stands with him, and is full of joy to hear the bridegroom's voice, he must become greater than I. The one who comes from above all the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and is of the earth. He who comes from above does not come from the earth. He testifies to what he has heard and seen.

Power of Praise

- “Speaking” - Communicating
- “Teaching”
- “Admonishing”
- “Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs”
- “Singing”
- “Making melody in your heart to the Lord”
- “With thankfulness in your heart”



Eph. 5:19;
Colossians 3:16