

# Should Christians Worship God With Musical Instruments?


## Introduction

Build off of Roger's lesson last Sunday ...

- Holy Worship
  - Mk 7:6-7: *And He said to them, ... "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. "In vain they worship Me, teaching the precepts of men as [God's] doctrines." - Translation mine.*
  - For worship to be holy it needs to be...
    - From the heart...
    - And according to God's command.
    - Disobedient worship ≠ worship of the heart (*their heart is far from me because they teach man's precepts as God's doctrine*)
  - Example: Jeroboam
    - He just made up his own religion.
    - This worship was not holy.
  - Holy
    - Holy means it belongs to God.
    - If it's God's worship, He has the right to demand how He wants His worship to be.
    - So worship that isn't according to God's demands is not holy.
- Specific application of holy worship: Christian worship with musical instruments
  - Asked Roger
    - Why didn't he bring up this application?
    - Roger: I didn't want to say it without having sufficient time to explain it.
    - I thought that was wise.
  - **\* Bad basis for convictions:**
    - Many churches do things because that's just what they.
    - The members go along with those activities, not because they are convicted by scripture, but because they just accept the way their church does things.
    - This is NOT good practice.
    - We don't want to do that here.
  - This church does NOT use instruments when worshipping God
    - Announcement:
      - If you are a member of this congregation, you know that we don't use instruments here when we worship.
      - If you are visiting... now you *also* know.
    - Why we don't
      - This is not just because we lack the talent.

- This is not just because we can't afford to buy the instruments or pay a band.
- This is a deliberate choice we make because we are convicted by scripture that worshipping God without musical instruments is what pleases Him.
- Why you should accept that
  - If you are a member of this congregation, you clearly are okay with that, but...
    - Is that because you just accept what this church does?
    - Or are you convicted by scripture that that is what is right?
    - I want to make sure our members agree with this because they are convicted by scripture.
  - If you are not a member...
    - This idea might confuse you.
    - I would like to explain how we come to this conclusion from **scripture** (in particular the **NT**).

## What Does the NT Say About Worship With Musical Instruments?

 *Soooo.... what DOES the NT say about worship with musical instruments? Not much.*

- NT passages about singing
  - Examples of singing:
    - Mat 26: 30, Mk 14:26: Jesus and the disciples on the Mount of Olives.
    - Acts 16:25: Paul and Silas singing hymns in prison.
    - Revelation
      - Rev 5, 14, 15, 18: instances of angels, spiritual beings, and victorious saints singing with harps.
      - Things to keep in mind:
        - These are heavenly visions, fantastic images of heavenly glory.
        - The visions contain images of monsters, creatures with eyes all over their bodies, seas of glass, floating cities.
        - These examples are not church examples or instructions. These are fantastic images of heavenly worship greatly resembling OT worship (\*which will be significant in a bit).
        - So we shouldn't use these examples to determine how we on *earth* ought to worship God.
  - Commands to sing:
    - James 5:13: Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.
    - I Cor 14:15: What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.
      - We need to sing with our minds.
      - In the context, "with the mind" means understanding the words (vs 16: *Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will ... one ... say the "Amen" ... since he does not know what you are saying?*)
    - Eph 5:18-19: *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, 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.*



- Singing is speaking to one another.
- We make melody with our hearts.
- Col 3:16: *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.*
  - By singing we let the word dwell within us.
  - Singing is:
    - Teaching one another
    - Admonishing one another.
    - Giving thanks to God.



- Commentary:
  - We are never given any instruction or example to worship God in the new covenant with instruments.
    - In these verses about worship we are told to:
      - Sing
      - Speak to one another.
      - Teach and admonish one another.
      - Make melody in the heart (the heart is the instrument).
    - The emphasis is on the meaning and words
      - We sing with our minds (understanding)
      - Teaching and admonishing.
      - Letting the word dwell within us.
      - Giving thanks to God.
  - Based on NT scripture, why should we add instruments?
    1. **Doesn't tell** us to.
    2. We don't have **examples** of churches using instruments.
    3. The **instruments don't accomplish any of the purposes** given for singing.
  - Why *do* we add instruments?
    - Not based on God's commands.
    - Is it just OUR preference?

*Still.....*



## **The New Testament Doesn't Say You *Can't***

*That is very true, but that is a gross misunderstanding of how God's authority works.*



- God does *NOT* need to explicitly prohibit everything He doesn't want.
  - God knows what He wants.
  - God is able to express what He wants sufficiently. He is not going to forget anything.
  - God stating what He wants, necessarily prohibits anything different.
  - EX: (humans work the same way)
    - Mother gives her son a \$20 bill to buy milk.
    - He also buys a candy bar with the excess funds.
    - Did he disobey? She didn't specify not to buy a candy bar, and if she did, then does that mean he could have bought a soda because she didn't explicitly prohibit that either?



- We see this exhibited in multiple OT examples



- I Sam 15: Saul when he spared the best of the flocks to make sacrifices and he was removed from the throne.



- Lev 11: Nadab & Abihu when they slightly changed one detail concerning the incense offering and were consumed by fire.



- I Chron 13-15 David when he transported the ark of the covenant on a cart



- Background:
  - Ark of the covenant was a golden box that rested in the tabernacle / temple and was meant to be God's throne.
  - It was a sacred object not to be touched by humans.
  - The Israelites foolishly had taken it out of the tabernacle and it had been stolen by the Philistines.
  - The Philistines returned the object, but the Israelites never put the ark back into the temple.
  - Years later, David then seeks to move the ark to Jerusalem where it would ultimately be placed in the future temple.

- The events:

- David transports the ark on a cart:
  - I Chron 13:7: *They carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart.*
- Uzza touches the ark:
  - I Chron 13:9-10: *When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, because the oxen nearly upset it. The anger of the Lord burned against Uzza, so He struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark; and he died there before God.*



- David was confused and upset because the Lord reacted this way, until he went back and looked at God's instructions of how to properly transport the ark.

- The instructions of carrying the ark

- Ex 25:14: *You shall put the **poles** into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them.*
- Num 4:15: *the **sons of Kohath (Levites)** shall come to carry [the ark], so that they will not touch the holy objects and die. These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.*



- David transports the ark properly

- I Chron 15:2: *Then David said, "No one is to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for the Lord chose them to carry the ark of God and to minister to Him forever."*
- I Chron 15:13: *Because you did not carry it at the first, the Lord our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance."*
- I Chron 15:15: *The **sons of the Levites** carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the **poles** thereon, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord.*



- ✱ God didn't say don't transport it on a cart, but He did say have the Levites carry it.



- Conclusion:

- Justifying doing something because it isn't explicitly prohibited is not reasonable or pleasing to God.

*But....*

## What About Worshiping God With Instruments in the Old Testament?

*You might ask, "...But didn't they worship God with instruments in the Old Testament?"*

*Yes they did*



- Worship of God with instruments in the Old Testament
  - There are multiple times we see the Israelites worshipping God with instruments in the OT
    - Ex 15:20
    - Psalm 150
  - I Chron 13
    - It seems strange to reference I Chronicles 13 as an example of why we shouldn't worship God with instruments when they were worshipping God with instruments in verse 8.



- I Chron 13:8: *David and all Israel were celebrating before God with all their might, even with songs and with lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals and with trumpets.*
- They were also...
  - Moving the ark of the covenant.
  - Consecrating the priests.
  - Offering sacrifices
  - Dancing.
  - Planning on building a temple.



- Why did they worship with instruments?
  - Because they were commanded to
    - I Chron 25:1: *moreover, David and the commanders of the army set apart for the service some ... who were to **prophesy** with lyres, harps and cymbals.*
    - I Chron 25:6: *All these were **under the direction of their father to sing in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, harps and lyres, for the service of the house of God.***
    - II Chron 29:25: *[Hezekiah] then stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with harps and with lyres, according to the command of David and of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; **for the command** was from the Lord through His prophets.*

**\* God God commanded through the prophets the use of musical instruments for temple worship. That's why they used them.**



**\* We however, are not under the Old Covenant, therefore those commandments are not for us.**

- The Old Covenant was different worship
  - They had temple, priests, sacrifices, etc. because they were commanded to do that.

- They had musical worship because they were commanded to do that.



- New Covenant has different worship
  - We are under a new covenant, and we worship in different ways. What they did under the old covenant doesn't determine what we do today.
  - We don't have physical temple, the church is the spiritual temple.
  - We don't have animal sacrifices, we have the sacrifice of Christ.
  - They had human priests, we have the One high priest.
  - They had musical worship, we have spiritual worship of the heart.

- Conclusion: The Israelites worshipping with musical instruments under the Old Covenant doesn't justify us worshipping God with instruments under the New Covenant anymore than offering a lamb for the forgiveness of sins.

## **The Early Churches Did Not Use Musical Instruments**

*That teaching is a bit extreme. All Christians worship with instruments. Is it really that big of a deal?*

- A seemingly powerful argument in favor of the use of musical instruments in Christian worship is the fact that virtually all of contemporary Christendom does.
- It might surprise you then to find out that it has NOT always been that way.
- Throughout the majority of church history most Bible believers opposed the use of musical instruments in worship.



- Catholic Church
  - The Catholic church was one of the first mainstream Christian groups to introduce musical instruments in worship.
    - That wasn't until 700's! (over six centuries after the first church)
    - Originally only to guide in the logistics of singing
      - Finding pitch
      - Teaching songs
    - After MUCH debate (among Catholics)
    - A debate that continued until the 1200's. (Quotes from Thomas Aquinas himself who opposed the use of instruments in worship)

- Baptist and Protestant churches
  - No common until the 1800's.

- Quotes:



- THOMAS AQUINAS - Catholic (1225): *"Our church does not use musical instruments, such as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize."*



- JOHN CALVIN - Protestant Reformation (1509-1564): *"Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, the restoration of other shadows of the law."*



- JOHN WESLEY - Anglican (1703-1791 AD): *"I have no objection to the instruments of music in our chapels, providing they are neither seen nor heard."*

- Concerning MARTIN LUTHER's reform of the Catholic church: *"The Early Reformers, when they came out of Rome, removed them [organs] as the monuments of idolatry. Luther called the organ an ensign of Baal"*.
- BENEDICT, Baptist Historian said this in 1840: *"Staunch old Baptists in former times would as soon tolerated the Pope of Rome in their pulpits as an organ in their galleries, and yet the instrument has gradually found its way among them.... How far this modern organ fever will extend among our people, and whether it will on the whole work a RE-formation or DE-formation in their singing service, time will more fully develop."*
- ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (354-430 AD): *"Musical instruments were not used. The pipe, tabret, and harp here associate so intimately with the sensual heathen cults, as well as with the wild revelries and shameless performances of the degenerate theater and circus"*
- ERASMUS (1466-1536 AD): *"We have brought into our churches certain operatic and theatrical music; such a confused, disorderly chattering of some words as I hardly think was ever in any of the Grecian or Roman theatres. The church rings with the noise of trumpets, pipes, and dulcimers; and human voices strive to bear their part with them. Men run to church as to a theatre, to have their ears tickled. And for this end organ makers are hired with great salaries, and a company of boys, who waste all their time learning these whining tones."*
- Conclusion
  - Despite the majority of the Christian world today worshipping God with instruments today...
  - Christian instrumental worship was not mainstream practice until 200 years ago.
  - For nearly 2,000 years the majority of Christians were convicted that worshipping God with musical instruments is not pleasing to Him.
  - What changed?
- \* Note:
  - The lack of worship with musical instruments in early church history does not prove that it isn't acceptable to God.
  - Church history is not the authority of what God does or doesn't want. Only the scriptures are.
  - Reviewing their practice only proves how the early church interpreted the scriptures.
  - So what does scripture say about worshipping God with musical instruments?



## Conclusion

- Holy Worship is God's Worship
  - If it's His worship, He's allowed to decide how He wants it to be.
  - He has told us how He wants it to be.
  - Let's not defile His holy worship by imposing our own selfish preferences.
- Rom 10:9: *if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*
- Confessing Jesus as Lord is not just believing He existed, but surrendering to Him as Lord, the One in charge.
- He did what was best for us, He deserves for us to worship Him in a submissive way, rather than how we want.