

Music and the Bible

Instrumental Music in Worship

Introduction

- Much of what we have looked at has focused on singing with the voice with passing notice of the use of instruments in worship.
- Just as singing was controversial at times in our Christian heritage, even more so is the use of instrumental music in worship.
- Looking around today you would likely not realize there was ever any controversy in their use (unless you talk to the Church of Christ...).

Musical Instruments in Worship in the Old Testament

- David invented some instruments – I Chronicles 23:5, Amos 6:5
- Types of instruments used by the Jews:
 - Cymbals – I Chronicles 15:16, 16:5
 - Tabrets, Timbrels, Tambourines – Exodus 15:20, I Samuel 10:5
 - Harps, Lyres (various forms and designs) – I Kings 10:12, II Chronicles 9:11
 - Pipes, Flutes (various forms and designs) – Isaiah 5:12, 30:29
 - Note – shofars, trumpets, and bells were not used in making music.
- It is clear that instrumental music was used to accompany singing in worship – Exodus 15:20, I Chronicles 16:5, Psalm 92:3
- CONCLUSION – It was proper, accepted, and commanded to use instrumental music in worship.

Musical Instruments in Worship in the New Testament

- There is largely silence in the New Testament on this subject while singing is clearly approved - Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, James 5:13
- Paul alludes to musical instruments in I Corinthians 13:1 and 14:7 but it is unclear if this refers to secular, Jewish, Christian, or generic music.
- Musical instruments are found in Revelation – Revelation 5:8, 14:2, 15:2
 - CONCLUSION – It is proper to use instrumental music in worship in Heaven or possibly in the future.

Countering Arguments Against Musical Instruments

- The primary argument made is that since there is no positive command to use musical instruments then their use was rejected along with other elements such as animal sacrifices.

- Counterpoint – If a positive command is required, then what about hymn books, pews, microphones, electricity, tuning forks, and so on?
- This argument from silence is extremely poor both logically and Biblically because the Bible is *full* of references of instrumental music in worship.
- Music is essentially carnal and does not promote spiritual worship or it distracts from it.
 - Counterpoint – Then why did God allow it in the Old Testament?
 - If was part of the “imperfect” Law and done away with, why are we still commanded to sing psalms (as Christ Himself did) which contain numerous references to playing musical instruments?
- The early church did not use musical instruments.
 - This is essentially true but misleading.
 - There are multiple reasons why the early church did not use musical instruments:
 - Instruments were impractical to small congregations (often in hiding with no regular meeting place)
 - They emphasized the *words* sung over the music it was sung to.
 - They associated most music with pagan rituals or Jewish worship, both of which they strove to separate from to strengthen their identity.
 - The science of music was not widespread or taught (most early Christians may have even been illiterate).

Principles for Using Musical Instruments in Worship

- They must enhance, instruct, and support *vocal* music and the message of the words sung.
 - The emphasis must be on *what* is sung – Ephesians 5:19
- They must be used in a way to bring glory to God and not the musician – I Corinthians 10:31
- They must not be used to artificially stimulate the human spirit.
 - God must be the catalyst for worship, not the ambience
- They must not bring worldly associations with their use – James 4:4