

Instrumental Music

Sound Doctrine Series

8 September 2019 – Embry Hills

Sound Doctrine Series

- What is the Church?
- Gender Roles
- Collection and Use of Church Treasury
- Who is a Christian?
- **Instrumental Music**
- Heaven and Hell
- The Lord's Supper

Instrumental Music

- A Simple Answer
- Other Decisions (& Reasons)
- Instruments in the Old Testament
- New Testament references to OT Singing

Jesus Parting Words...

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

New Testament Commands on Singing

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ **speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,** ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... (Eph 5:18-19)

New Testament Commands on Singing

¹⁶ 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.** ¹⁷ 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. (Col 3:16-17)

New Testament Commands on Singing

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him **sing psalms**. (James 5:12-14)

New Testament Teaching – Examples/Instructions

- [Jesus and His disciples just after the last supper] “Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ And when **they had sung a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mk 14:25-26)
- [Paul & Silas in Prison] But at midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God**, and the prisoners were listening to them. (Acts 16:25)
- [Paul to the Corinthians] What is the conclusion 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**. (I Cor 14:15)

NT Commands for & Examples of the Use of Instruments in Worship

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One Church's Position

Freedom in Christ also requires us to constantly evaluate our attitudes and practices. We believe in the freedom of the church to remove barriers and limitations that are not what God intended. We as an elected body have reached the conclusion that our historical practice regarding instruments as part of worship is one such limitation. Having examined the scriptures together as a group and **not being able to find the kind of limitation** that would justify our historical position on this matter, we choose to embrace freedom, rather than impose limits, on the issue of instruments in worship. Therefore, we are announcing today that in the coming months, **we will offer a worship service in which instruments will be used** in addition to our current a cappella worship service.

The issue is not significant enough [to God] to require compliance

Current practice is only based on tradition

There is nothing in the Bible that forbids it.

Another Church's Position

[An elder] drew a biblical debate over whether circumcision to accept the gospel. While **circumcision was a longtime tradition** of the Jews, the mission of **the gospel required allowing Gentiles freedom** in that regard, he said.

Circumcision is a "longtime tradition" rather than a command of God

The decision is based on making it easy for new converts

He pointed to Acts 15:19, where James said, "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."

Popularity among members is key.

The issue is not significant enough [to God] to require compliance

But he said, "**We've already lost too many over a question that's way too unimportant.**"

Potential Positions

- Most people worship with a musical instrument. How could so many [good, sincere...] people be wrong?
- It's not a "major" issue. (It doesn't matter that much to God.)
- We will lose members if we don't have a contemporary worship.
- It's another way for people to use their talents to God's glory.
- God allowed it in the Old Testament.
- It's a great aid to the singing, not wrong, but not necessary.
- I'm uncomfortable worshiping with an instrument, but I wouldn't condemn anyone who does.
- I will go along with whatever the church decides.

A False Narrative

- **All Christians, beginning in the first century and all through history, have used instruments in the collective worship – if they desired.**
- **In the early 19th Century the Stone-Campbell movement, with its strict interpretation of scripture rejected instruments in worship.**
- **This narrow-mindedness has caused division and driven people away down to this day.**
- **Finally, some Christians and local churches of Christ are progressing beyond this divisive, unpopular, narrow-minded position and allowing choice and diversity in their public worship.**

Timeline of the Acceptance of Instruments

- **2nd-3rd Century Writers** – Universally condemned using instruments Music as unspiritual and a dangerous return to [inferior] Judaism.
- **670 AD** – Pope Vitalian brought an organ into a Roman church
- **812 AD** – An organ was brought into a Cathedral in France
- **Thomas Aquinas (1260 AD)** – “The church does not use musical instruments such as the harp or lyre when praising God in case she should seem to fall back into Judaism. Instruments usually move the soul more to pleasure than create inner moral goodness.”
- **15th-16th Century** – Organs gained prominence in the Roman church, and other instruments were introduced.
- **16th Century** – Instrumental music was controversial among Protestants, gradually gaining acceptance in most denominations

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Ps 150

¹ Praise the LORD!

Praise God **in His sanctuary**;

Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

² Praise Him for His mighty acts;

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

³ Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;

Praise Him with the lute and harp!

⁴ Praise Him with the timbrel **and dance**;

Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

⁵ Praise Him with loud cymbals;

Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD!

A Future Change in the Place of Worship (Deut 12)

⁸ “You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes— ⁹ for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you. ¹⁰ But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, ¹¹ **then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide.** There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD....

¹³ Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; ¹⁴ but **in the place which the LORD chooses**, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.

Restriction on Place of Sacrifice – Deut 26:5-7

⁵ “You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you; ⁶ but **at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide**, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt. ⁷ And you shall roast and eat it in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents.

Musical Service in Jerusalem – Pre temple (1 Chr 6)

³¹ Now these are the men whom David appointed over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark came to rest. ³² They were ministering with **music before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of meeting**, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they served in their office according to their order.

The Institution of the Temple Music

- Specific Levites were appointed singers & musicians (I Chr 15:16)
 - Including an instructor
- Trumpets & other music marked the Ark's arrival (I Chr 16:5-6)
- (David's desire to build a temple vetoed by God.) (I Chr 17)
- 4000 musicians appointed for the "house of the LORD" (I Chr 23:5)
- Service was planned "as the LORD God of Israel had commanded" (I Chr 24:19); for "music in the house of the LORD" (I Chr 25:6)
 - See II Chr 8:14 – "... for so David the man of God had commanded."
- David gave temple plans to Solomon, "by the Spirit" (I Chr 28:12)
 - "All this," said David, "the LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans." (I Chr 28:19)

The Temple Dedication (II Chr 5:11-14)

¹¹ And it came to pass when the priests came out of the Most Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without keeping to their divisions), ¹² and the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, **having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets—** ¹³ indeed it came to pass, when the **trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound** to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they **lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music**, and praised the LORD, saying:

“For He is good,
For His mercy endures forever,”

that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ¹⁴ so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

Singing in the time of Jehoshaphat (II Chr 20)

¹⁸ And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. ¹⁹ Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with **voices loud and high**.

²⁰ So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." ²¹ And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those **who should sing to the LORD**, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army **and were saying**:

"Praise the LORD,
For His mercy endures forever." ...

²⁷ Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. ²⁸ So **they came to Jerusalem, with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets, to the house of the LORD**.

Worship Restoration of Hezekiah (II Chr 29:25-30)

²⁵ And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, **according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet**; for thus was the **commandment of the LORD by His prophets**. ²⁶ The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ **So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.** ²⁹ And when they had finished offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed and worshiped. ³⁰ Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.

Worship Restoration of Josiah (II Chron 35)

⁴ Prepare yourselves according to your fathers' houses, according to your divisions, **following the written instruction of David king of Israel and the written instruction of Solomon his son...**

¹⁵ And the **singers**, the sons of Asaph, were in their places, **according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer**. Also the gatekeepers were at each gate; they did not have to leave their position...

Worship Restoration of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3)

¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, **according to the ordinance of David king of Israel.** ¹¹ And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD:

“For He is good,
For His mercy endures forever toward Israel.”

Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

Worship Restoration of Nehemiah (Neh 12)

And the heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers across from them, to praise and give thanks, group alternating with group, **according to the command of David the man of God.** ...

²⁷ Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps. ...

⁴⁵ Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, **according to the command of David and Solomon his son.** ⁴⁶ For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Lessons from Old Testament Musical Worship

- Instrumental music was well-known in the 1st Century
- Instrumental music was itself a form of worship (not an aid)
 - Required skill, preparation, leadership, and effort (see I Chr 13:8)
 - It was not simply to “keep the singers in tune/time”
- The music followed strict commands and regulation from God
 - What instruments, who played, when, where, who led
- The written guidance could be followed centuries later
- Instrumental music was associated with the Temple & Sacrifice
 - The ark/tabernacle/temple
 - During the sacrifices and in the Temple Area
 - Part of the 24/7 temple environment

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Jerusalem is no Longer Special (John 4:21-24)

²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, **nor in Jerusalem**, worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will **worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.** ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Sacrifices Under the New Covenant (Heb 13)

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such **sacrifices** God is well pleased.

New Testament Teaching – Quoting the Old Testament

...And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And **sing to Your name.**”

(Rom 15:9-10; Ps 18:49; II Sam 22:50)

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying: “I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly [*ekklesia*] **I will sing praise** to You.” (Heb 2:11-13; Ps 22:22)

Singing [Everywhere] in the New Covenant (Is 42)

Thus says God the LORD,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it,
Who **gives breath** to the people on it,
And **spirit** to those who walk on it:
⁶ “I, the LORD, have called You in **righteousness**,
And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,
As a **light to the Gentiles**,

¹⁰ **Sing** to the LORD a new song,
And **His praise** from the ends of the earth,
You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it,
You coastlands and you inhabitants of them! (Is 42:5-6, 10)

Early Christian Writers on Instruments in Worship

- **Justin Martyr (mid 2nd Century)**

“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 use of plain song. Musical organs pertain to the Jewish ceremonies and agree no more to us than circumcision.”

- **Clement of Alexandria (200 AD)**

“Leave the pipe to the shepherd, the flute to the men who are in fear of gods and are intent upon their idol worshipping. Such musical instruments must be excluded from our wineless feasts. But as for us, we make use of one instrument alone, the word of peace by whom we pay homage to God, no longer with ancient harp, or trumpet, or drum or flute.

Early Christian Writers on Instruments in Worship

- **Origen (mid 3rd Century, commenting on Psalm 32:2)**

“The musical instruments of the Old Covenant, understood spiritually, are applicable to us. The body and the spirit are in tune for the wise man who employs the members of the body and the powers of the soul as strings. He who makes melody with the mind makes melody well, speaking spiritual songs and singing in his heart to God.”

Early Christian Writers on Instruments in Worship

- **Eusebius (330 AD)**

“When, formerly, the people of the circumcision worshiped, through types, it was not unreasonable that they raised hymns to God on psalteries and kithara. We, however, upon a living psaltery and an animate kithara and in spiritual songs that we render the hymn. And so more sweetly pleasing to God than any musical instrument will be the symphony of the people of God by which in every church of God, with kindred spirit and single disposition with one mind and unanimity of faith and piety we raise melody in unison in our worship.

Timeline of the Acceptance of Instruments

Erasmus (early 16th) – “Modern church music is so constructed that the congregation cannot hear one distinct word. The choristers themselves do not understand what they are singing. Yet according to priests and monks, it constitutes the whole of religion. Why will they not listen to Paul? In college or monastery it is still the same: instrumental music, nothing but instrumental music. There was no such music in Paul’s time... We have introduced into churches a type of laborious and theatrical music, a confused chattering of diverse voices, such as I do not think was ever heard in the theaters of the Greeks or the Romans. They perform everything with slides, trumpets, trombones, cornets, and little flutes, and with these the voices of men contend. Men run to church as to a theater to have their ears tickled.”

Revelation Reference to Singing

- Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying... (Rev 5:8-10)
- And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³ They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. (Rev 14:2-4)
- And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. ³ They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! (Rev 15:2-4)