

Why We Do Not Use Instrumental Music in Worship

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One of the first things that people notice when they visit our worship services is that we don't use instrumental music. Some wonder whether it is a matter of finance, personal preference or a matter of conviction.

The reason a flag is raised is that most of the denominations have some form of instrumental music in worship. An organ or piano is most common. However, it is not uncommon to find churches with a full band – including drums and brass instruments.

Why do we not use instrumental music in worship?

It Is Not Authorized

Careful students know that we must have Bible authority for all that we do in service to God. Paul said, "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. 3:17). To do a thing "in the name of" someone is to do it by their power or authority (Acts 4:7). John wrote that we must abide within the doctrine of Christ (2 Jno. 9).

Bible authority is established by (1) Command, (2) Example or (3) Necessary inference. All three of these were used in settling the matter of circumcision in Acts 15. Without a command or direct statement, an example that is approved of God or some principle that necessarily infers the matter, it is without Bible authority.

To illustrate: what would be wrong with having grape jelly on the Lord's table – along with the bread and fruit of the vine? There is no command to have it. We find no example of such. Furthermore, there is no passage that causes us to conclude that it was used or should be. Thus, there is no Bible authority for it. The same is true with instrumental music. To do something without Bible authority is sinful (2 Jno. 9).

What God did authorize, as far as music is concerned, is singing.
Consider the following passages:

"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" (Col. 3:16).

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

There are seven other passages in the NT that deal with music in worship. All refer to singing (Matt. 26:30; Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Heb. 13:15). There is no passage authorizing the instrument.

God did authorize singing. God did not authorize instrumental music. Therefore, it is unscriptural.

An Addition to the Word of God

Since God specified singing, we are not at liberty to use any other kind of music. For example, Noah was told to build the ark of "gopher wood" (Gen. 6:14). Had God said, "wood" (leaving it in the generic), Noah would have been at liberty to use any kind of wood. Yet, because God specified "gopher" that eliminated the use of any other kind of wood. To build the ark of oak would not be authorized. To use gopher and oak would not be authorized.

Let's consider again the matter of the Lord's Supper. God specified that the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine should be used (Matt. 26:17-28). If we decide that we want grape jelly to go with our bread, we now have another element on the table and thus an addition to the word of God.

The same is true of music in worship. Had God told us to have music (leaving it in the generic), we could have chosen vocal or instrumental or a combination of both. However, since God specified, singing (Eph. 5:19), other kinds of music are thus eliminated. Instrumental music is therefore an addition to the word of God.