

In the religious world the conversation concerning instrumental music would be more along the lines of type and preference. The word “sin” would not surface in those discussions. Hence, the title of this lesson might prove puzzling to those who have accepted instrumental music as a normal part of worship.

Well, the goal of this study is not to cause people to scratch their heads in confusion, but rather, to candidly address the subject of instrumental music in Christian worship. Further, we in the Lord’s church do not use the word “sin” lightly; therefore, we are not suggesting that this is just a matter of opinion or preference. No, not at all. It is a sin to bring into the worship of God that which he did not authorize!

“Well,” says one, “Don’t you believe in the Bible? God did authorize instrumental music in worship, just look in the Old Testament.” Folks, no one believes in the Bible more strongly than we do. We believe that “*all scripture is given by inspiration of God...*” (II Timothy 3:16), and we study the Old Testament, for it was written for our learning (Romans 15:4). But we do not live under the Old Testament law nor does it govern our worship to God (Romans 7:1-7).

I do not doubt the sincerity of those who argue in favor of instrumental music based upon the Old Testament, but they have not considered the full ramification of what they are saying. The Old Testament is not like a supermarket where you pick and choose. It is an all or nothing proposition (Galatians 3:10), and all of it will kill you (Galatians 5:4; Acts 15:5; 10). For instance, those who adamantly argue in favor of instrumental music based upon the Old Testament would flatly deny other things based upon the same source:

- Animal sacrifice: not only for atonement (Leviticus 16:10-16), but for every child that is born (Leviticus 12:1-8). If a person brought a lamb to the worship services and wanted to offer it as a sacrifice, would you permit it? If your answer is “NO!” what would you say to that person when he would ask, “Don’t you believe in the Bible? God authorized animal sacrifice, just look in the Old Testament.”
- Stoning: For those who violate the Sabbath day, by doing some type of physical work, even for picking up sticks (Numbers 15:32-36). For rebellious children (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). For homosexuality - they would not be talking same sex marriage back then folks (Leviticus 20:13). For adultery (Leviticus 20:10). If you are aghast at the mere thought, how would you answer the person who said “Don’t you believe in the Bible? God authorized stoning, just look in the Old Testament”.
- Polygamy: The more the merrier. Go home and tell you wife that you love her but... one wife is not enough. After

ducking, you could say “Don’t you believe in the Bible? God allowed more than one wife; just look in the Old Testament, Solomon had hundreds of them” (I Kings 11:3).

- Feast days: Three of which every male was required to attend (Deuteronomy 16:16): The feast of unleavened bread (Passover), feast of weeks (Pentecost), and the feast of tabernacles (the wanderings in the wilderness see Nehemiah 8:13ff). Are you ready for a trip to Jerusalem? No? Don’t you believe the Bible? God authorized feast days, just look in the Old Testament.

Do you see the slippery slope that is inherent in the argument, “Don’t you believe in the Bible? Look in the Old Testament.”

Friends, before we leave the Old Testament argument there are some needful observations:

1. The Old Testament law was addressed **only** to the Jews (Deuteronomy 5:1-3; Malachi 4:4).
2. The Law was given for a specific purpose with a set time to expire. “*Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made...*” (Galatians 3:19). We are left to wonder what seed is under consideration. We are told, “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ*” (Galatians 3:16).
3. The Old Testament law was intended to keep the seed pure until Christ came, then Jesus took the law out of the way nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14), abolishing the law in his flesh (Ephesians 2:15). Christ gave us a New Testament that included all men for all time (Hebrews 9:16-17; 8:6-13).
4. We are dead to the Old Testament law that we might be married to Christ (Romans 7:1-4). You cannot justify religious practices based upon a law that is dead and has been removed!

Then again, are you aware of the fact that it was more than five hundred years after the law was given at Sinai before instruments of music were introduced into the worship of God? And it was David who introduced them: “*Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith*” (I Chronicles 23:5). “*And the Levites stood with the instrument of David, and the priest with the trumpets*” (I Chronicles 29:26). “*And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel*” (Ezra 3:10).

Now listen to Amos chapter six where a number of woes are given, then when you get to verse five there is this, “*That chant to the sound of viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David*” (Amos 6:5). What did David do? He introduced instruments of music into worship. What did God say about it? Woe unto them that do the same thing.

Well, failing to find help for instrumental music in the Old Testament, many turn to heaven for justification. There are harps in heaven; therefore, I can use an organ, piano, bell, guitars and drums in worship on earth. Setting aside the movies and cartoons which has everyone going into heaven getting a set of wings and a harp to pluck, are there physical harps in a spiritual realm?

Revelation 14:2 is often used as an example, “*And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps*” (American Standard Version 1901). What was John hearing? He was hearing a voice from heaven and the voice sounded like the voice of many waters, the voice of a great thunder, and the voice sounded like harpers harping with their harps. John was trying to describe the beauty and power he heard, as one hundred and forty four thousand sang in unison, a new song before the throne. What were the one hundred and forty four thousand doing? Singing!

But for the sake of argument, suppose one could prove that there were physical harps in heaven. They cannot, but if they could, would that justify instrumental music in worship? “Well,” one might say, “if it is in heaven, I want it here and now.” Folks, there are a lot of things that are in heaven that have absolutely no place in the church. There is a temple and throne in heaven (Revelation 7:15; 11:19). Should we have a temple and throne in the church? There is a tree of life in heaven (Revelation 22:2). Should there be a tree of life in the church? In heaven you find a golden censer and incense (Revelation 8:3). Should we have those in the church? In heaven there will be no marriage (Matthew 22:30). Should we stop having marriage here and now? Friends, do you see how silly the argument, “If it is in heaven I want it here and now.” No more death, pain, tears and sorrow are promised in heaven, but as long as time remains they will be a part of this life.

The serious question is this; how did the first century church worship God in song? The following is every passage in the New Testament that deals with worship or praise offered unto God:

- “*And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives*” (Matthew 26:30).
- “*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang*

*praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them*" (Acts 16:25).

- *"And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name"* (Romans 15:9).
- *"What is it then? 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 also"* (I Corinthians 14:15).
- *"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:19).
- *"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"* (Colossians 3:16).
- *"Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee"* (Hebrews 2:12).
- *"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms"* (James 5:13).

In every single passage they sang and made the melody in their hearts. Understand please, everyone who has studied the matter at all will acknowledge that in the first century church they **never** used instruments of music. It would be hundred of years after the pen of inspiration was set aside before instruments were brought into the worship of God. Not because God requested it, not because Christ authorized it, not because the apostles practiced it, not because the Holy Spirit revealed it. It was because men wanted it!!!

Years ago a young lady asked me to go study with her husband on the subject of instrumental music, of course, I agreed. I went to their house and her husband just nodded his head at me, looking none too happy. I went through all the passages on the subject as we did in this lesson, and then added a few additional points for him to consider.

The promise Jesus made to his apostles in John 16:13, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come"*. The Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into **all truth**, but he did not guide them into the use of instrumental music.

The words of the apostle Paul to the elders at the church of Ephesus *"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:26-27). Paul preached the whole counsel of God, but he

**never** preached instrumental music.

One of the great authority passages of the New Testament, *"And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him"* (Colossians 3:17). Whatever we do religiously must be done in the name (by the authority) of Christ. But we cannot use instrumental music by his authority, because he **never authorized** the use of instruments.

The all-sufficiency of the scriptures, *"All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The scriptures are able to provide for our every spiritual need, that we may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, but the scriptures never provide for the use of instrumental music in Christian worship.

I asked him if he understood, and he just stared at me across the table. I do not know how much time went by, but it seemed like an hour. I would wait a few minutes and then ask him again if he understood or had any questions, and he continued to just at stare me. Finally, (he had one of those zipper Bibles) he slammed it shut, zipped it up and said "I DON'T CARE." I thanked him for being honest, and said, **"We do care."**

Folks, no one has a right to bring into the worship of God that which he did not put there. If you do, you have sinned, and separated yourself from the God you claim to worship and serve (2 John 9-11). No thoughtful person wants to do that. Jesus told us how to worship. Listen to him, *"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23-24). To be a true worshipper, one must worship God from the heart and according to truth.

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or contact the

39th Street Church of Christ  
15331 East 39th Street

Independence, MO 64055-4240 USA

# I Know...

## Instrumental Music In Worship Is Sinful

by  
Jay Yeager

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