

Doctrine of Instrumental Worship

1. The Church of Christ insists that Biblical worship, in order to be pleasing to God, should be conducted without musical instruments. Several arguments are set forth for this position.

Argument. Music is to be made to God in the heart. *Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*

Response. The verse in Ephesians 5 is part of the apostle's general instruction for daily Christian living and does not say anything about a formal worship service. The Christians' daily walk should incorporate singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Praise is to be given for all things at all times. *Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

Argument. An appeal is made for non-instrumental worship based on Paul's epistle to the Colossians. *Colossians 3:16 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.*

Response. There is nothing in this verse, or in the context of the chapter, to conclude that Paul is speaking about a formal worship service. The next verse clearly reveals Paul is speaking about general Christian behavior. *Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

Argument. Church of Christ minister A. J. Edward Nowlin was so opposed to the use of musical instruments in worship that he wrote, "To teach such is to preach 'another gospel.'" *2 John 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*

Response. The letter to the elect lady to whom John was writing has nothing to do with music or the proper form of a worship service, but everything to do with the abusive behavior of wandering preachers who were deceiving the people of God by denying that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God. John wanted to encourage the elect lady, and all Christians, to walk in the truth and love, and not believe what the false teachers were saying about Jesus.

2. It is instructive to notice the Greek word "psalms" in Ephesians 5. The word "*psalmos* (psal-mos'); a set piece of music, i.e. a sacred ode (accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument; a "psalm"); collectively, the book of the Psalms" (New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary.)
 - *Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*

3. The early church consisted of many Jews who were very comfortable with using musical instruments in worship as commanded in the psalms, and played by the greatest of the saints.

The Command to Use Musical Instruments in Sanctuary Worship

- *Psalms 33:2 Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. 3 Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise. 4 For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.*
- *Psalms 150 Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. 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 psaltery and harp. 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. 6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.*

God's People Allowed Musical Instruments in Worship

- *David. 2 Samuel 6:5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.*
 - *Heman and Jeduthun. 1 Chronicles 16:42 And with them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God. And the sons of Jeduthun were porters.*
 - *Levites. Nehemiah 12:27 And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps.*
4. Those in heaven use a harp, a musical instrument, to worship God. It is irrational to believe and teach that what is permitted in the worship of God in heaven is forbidden in the church on earth.
 - *Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*
 - *Revelation 14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:*

- *Revelation 15:2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*
5. During His ministry on earth, Jesus worshipped in the Temple and local synagogue where musical instruments were an integral part of the service. Oh may God's people use every musical instrument possible to worship the Lord.