

Is Instrumental Music Now Acceptable?

Intro: We have all heard the story of someone asking what's wrong with using mechanical instruments of music in worship that someone says, "Ain't no Bible for it." Someone else adds, "There ye 'ere." This is a crude way of expressing that there is no Biblical authority for the practice. Regarding the specific question we are dealing with, *now* is being used to refer to the New Testament Dispensation. Sadly, we have more and more who are giving up the position and claiming it is now acceptable to God.

I. AUTHORITY

A. Everything we do must have Bible authority.

1. Col. 3:17 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."
2. Mat. 21:23-27 ²³ "And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? ²⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? ²⁶ But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. ²⁷ And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

B. Biblical music for today:

1. Eph. 5:19 ¹⁹ "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;"
2. Col. 3:16 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."
3. 1 Cor. 14:15 ¹⁵ "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."
4. Rom. 15:9 ⁹ "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."
5. Heb. 2:12 ¹² "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."
6. Jam. 5:13 ¹³ "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms."
7. We see examples of this:
 - a. Mat. 26:30 ³⁰ "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."
 - b. Acts 16:25 ²⁵ "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."

C. What we learn from these:

1. That which God authorizes is singing: not some other type or classification of music.
2. That singing is a reciprocal action.
 - a. We are doing it to each other and doing it at the same time.
 - b. This excludes using choirs, choruses, or solos.
3. The singing is to be "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs."
4. In the singing we teach and admonish.
 - a. We must teach the truth—the song must teach the truth.
 - b. We must not sing those songs that teach error ("Just a Little Talk with Jesus," "Jesus is Coming Soon," et al.).

D. We do not have the right to alter what God has said.

1. Rev. 22:18-19 ¹⁸“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: ¹⁹And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.”
2. Gal. 1:6-9 ⁶“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

II. SOME BASIC ARGUMENTS PROVING THEY ARE WRONG.**A. We must act by faith.**

1. To please God, we must act by faith.
 - a. 2 Cor. 5:7 ⁷“(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)”
 - b. Heb. 11:6 ⁶“But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
2. Faith comes by hearing God’s Word; Rom. 10:17 ¹⁷“So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
3. Instrumental Music is not of faith as it is not in the New Testament.
4. Thus: No Word, then no faith; no faith, then no walking by faith; no walking by faith, then no pleasing God.

B. Law of authority:

1. We must have authority.
 - a. Mat. 21:23-27 ²³“And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? ²⁴And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? ²⁶But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. ²⁷And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”
 - b. Col. 3:17 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.”
2. Authority originates from either God or man.
3. Singing has authority from God; instrumental music does not.
4. Instrumental music is thus vain worship; Mat. 15:9 ⁹“But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.”

C. Law of worship:

1. John 4:23-24 ²³“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. ²⁴God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.”
2. Worship must be according to truth.
 - a. If it is not according to truth, it is not true worship but false worship.
 - b. God’s Word is truth; John 17:17 ¹⁷“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
3. Singing is according to truth; instrumental music is not.

D. Nature of worship.

1. John 4:23-24 ^{“23} 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. ²⁴ God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.”
2. *Worship* is the Christian drawing near to and communing in his heart and spirit with his Creator.
 - a. Singing allows the Christian to do this.
 - b. Instrumental Music does not.

E. Rejects the authority of Christ.

1. Christ has all authority.
 - a. Mat. 28:18 ^{“18} And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”
 - b. He is the head of the church.
 - (1) Eph. 1:22-23 ^{“22} And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, ²³ Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
 - (2) Col. 1:18 ^{“18} And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.”
 - (3) He does not share it with anyone else.
2. Christ authorized singing.
3. Christ never authorized instrumental music in worship to God.

III. ARGUMENTS FOR INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC**A. We want it; we like it; it sounds good to us.**

1. This makes man god and makes God subservient to man.
2. It ignores what the Bible says.

B. It is simply an aid or expedient.

1. For something to be an expedient, it must first be authorized, but there is no authorization for the instrument.
2. A true aid will be implied in the authorized command or act and is thereby authorized; the instrument is not implied in sing.
3. An aid or expedient does not add to or altar that which is authorized.

C. It is not condemned in the New Testament.

1. This is the principle that whatever is not specifically condemned in Scripture is allowed.
2. Those who hold this position will not be consistent with it.
 - a. They will only use it with things they desire to have.
 - b. They will not allow:
 - (1) Rosary beads
 - (2) Potatoes and coke on the Lord’s Supper
3. Mechanical instrumental music and the Sabbath:
 - a. The New Testament mentions mechanical instrumental music 41 times without a word of condemnation.
 - b. The New Testament mentions the Sabbath 58 times without a word of condemnation.
 - c. However, mechanical instrumental music is not mentioned in the New Testament in connection with Christian worship even one time!

D. The Greek word ψάλλω (*psallo*) allows its usage.

1. Those in the first century would have known its meaning, and they did not use instruments (they first appearance was in the 6th century).
2. The radical meaning is to touch:
 - a. The object touched was not inherent in the word.
 - b. The applied meanings:
 - (1) To pluck the hair
 - (2) To twang the bowstring
 - (3) To twitch the carpenter's line
 - (4) To touch the chords of a musical instrument (make mechanical instrumental music)
 - (5) To touch the chords of the human heart (to sing, celebrate with hymns of praise)
3. Words change meaning over time:
 - a. E. A. Sophocles identified several periods of Greek.
 - (1) Mythical (prior to Homer)
 - (2) Ionic (Homer to 500 B.C.)
 - (3) Attic (500 B.C. to 283 B.C.)
 - (4) Alexandrian (283 B.C. to 146 B.C.)
 - (5) Roman (146 B.C. to A.D. 330)
 - (6) Byzantine (A.D. 330 to A.D. 1453)
 - b. During the Mythical, Ionic, and Attic periods, it had the idea of plucking or twanging of any kind.
 - c. By the Christian and Roman period, it had lost its notion of an instrument altogether.
4. The lexical evidence is clearly that the word means "to sing."

E. They were used in the Old Testament and in heaven.

1. The Old Testament is not our authority for New Testament worship.
2. There are many things used in the Old Testament that would be wrong if used today (i.e., sacrificial offerings, Passover, circumcision, polygamy, incense, Sabbath, et al.).
3. What one might do in heaven is not our authority for worship during this time.
 - a. They are not willing to accept all the things regarding heaven for today.
 - b. They will not generally accept incense; Rev. 5:8 ²⁸ "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."
 - c. There is no marriage in heaven; Mat. 22:29-30 ²⁹ "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

Conclusion: At one time God accepted instrumental music. In New Testament times, God said to sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" in worship to Him. That does not include the use of instrumental music or choirs/choruses.