



The Good News

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Is Instrumental Music Acceptable to God?

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Many churches in the world incorporate instrumental music in their worship services. This topic is especially important if we are active in personal evangelism and inviting people to church, as we may often be asked about non-instrumental music and congregational singing. The question asked this morning is, Is instrumental music acceptable to God?

“It was acceptable in the Old Testament!” – Indeed, it was acceptable in the Old Testament. It was commanded by God that instruments be used at specific times in the temple. Passages like **Psalm 33:2** show us how David praised the Lord with a harp and psaltery and strings. The problem with this argument is that the Hebrew writer says in **Heb. 7:12**, *“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.”* The Hebrew writer makes it clear that the law had to change to accommodate Jesus as High Priest. This change of law fulfilled the prophecies and expectations of the Old Law, removed it, and replaced it with the law of Christ. We no longer offer animal sacrifices to God, we no longer have physical tabernacles that must be laid out by God’s direction, and we no longer have to become circumcised to be made a part of the people of God. It is understandable and expected that when one law supersedes or replaces another, many of the specifics of the previous law will be done away with or changed. This is the case with instrumental music in the Old Law compared to the New Law. Just because God accepted instrumental music under the Old Law does not mean He will accept it under the New Law. **Eph. 5:19** and **Col. 3:16** are two passages in the New Law that describe the kind of worship that is acceptable to God, *“...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,”* (Eph. 5:19). Notice how that no mention of the harp or psaltery is found. As we look throughout the New Testament, no reference is ever made to instru-

mental music except for a mention of metaphorical harps in Heaven in the book of Revelation. Too often, people in other religious circles place too much emphasis on how the music sounds, and it leads to musical accompaniment because it “makes the music sound better”. Yet God does not command this, only our voices and heart in song.

“God never said not to!” – This argument is as circular as it is full of holes. God never said a lot of things, but that does not necessarily give us the authority to do them. The concept of authority is completely overlooked when appealing to this argument. It is assumed that God’s silence on certain things therefore provides authority to do them. However, when God is silent, we must look to what is said for our authority and not assume otherwise. In every example of God’s commandments, when He wanted something specific, He made it clear. In **Lev. 10:1**, Nadab and Abihu offered a sacrifice to God, but they added something to that which God had commanded, and they were killed because of it. This easily compares to countless churches adding instrument music without the specific command to do so.

I have encountered numerous individuals that have become very emotional when I have suggested that instrumental music is not acceptable. This is the source of the problem. Music appeals to emotion and it makes people feel connected to worship. Musical instruments multiply this feeling so that people feel so connected to God that they think it must be right. Unfortunately, our feelings have no bearing on what the Law of God says. While we should worship with emotion, our emotions must be guided by Scripture. Anything else is simply unacceptable to God.