

“Ready to Give a Defense”

Answering Our Friends’ Religious Questions

Lesson Six - Instrumental Music

Introduction. One of the most common questions that is sometimes posed to Christians has to do with what the Bible teaches about worship to God in song. To consider this let’s start with some basic principles.

I. “Unless the Lord builds the house...” (Psalm 127:1). This text suggests to us that it is important that man only put his trust in that which God has established. In all ages God has revealed what he wants man to do to worship Him. In all ages to act on one’s own imagination in matters of worship is condemned.

A. Cain & Abel (Genesis 4:3-5; Hebrews 11:4). The Hebrew writer tells us that Abel acted by faith. True faith is based upon the instruction of God (Romans 10:17). Abel obeyed God’s instruction and Cain did not.

B. David & the Ark of the Covenant. (I Chronicles 13:6-14; 15:2, 12-15). When David sought to return the ark to Jerusalem he first set it on a cart. Uzzah died in connection with this. David came to realize that God had instructed that only Levites were to carry the ark on poles.

C. Jeroboam’s Feast Days (I Kings 12:32, 33; 14:7-10). Jeroboam established his own religious festivals, rejecting the Law of Moses and was condemned for his apostasy.

D. Uzziah’s Incense (II Chronicles 26:16-20). King Uzziah presumed to take upon himself the right to burn incense in the temple, a duty exclusively given to priests. When he did so the Lord struck him with leprosy.

1. These examples show us that God expects His word to be followed and neither altered or amended.

II. Different Covenants — Different Standards. Just as God has revealed His expectations to man at different times throughout human history it is clear that God has set different standards at different times, under different covenants.

A. Moses & The Rock (Exodus 17:5,6; Numbers 20:7-12). On two occasions God brings forth water from rock, Moses is given different instructions each time. When Moses the second time does what he was told to do the first time he is prohibited from entering Canaan.

B. Priests Before & After Moses. All throughout human history there have been people identified as priests of God.

1. Patriarchal Age (Genesis 14:18). Melchizedek was a priest long before Levi or Aaron were even born.

2. The Law of Moses (Exodus 28:1). Under the Law of Moses only those of the tribe of Levi, who were descended from Aaron could serve as priests.

3. The Law of Christ (Revelation 1:6; 5:10). Under Christ, all Christians are priests regardless of tribe.

C. Jeroboam’s Priests (II Chronicles 13:9-11). When Jeroboam rejected the Law of Moses and appointed priests from all tribes it was condemned, in spite of the fact that later under Christ all believers would become priests.

1. These examples show that the same things may occur at different times, and yet be either acceptable or condemned based upon what God has authorized under the particular covenant.

III. Under the Law of Moses, God Instructed the Use of Mechanical Instruments of Music.

A. Dedication of the Temple (II Chronicles 5:11-14). A variety of instruments were used upon the dedication of the temple, as the ark was put in place and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

B. The Psalms (Psalm 55:1; Psalm 150:4). The Psalms in both their introductory instructions and in their content command instrumental music. Jesus says the Psalms were inspired by the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36; Psalm 110:1).

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- C. Hezekiah's Passover (II Chronicles 29:5). As this text describes Hezekiah's observation of the Passover, it reveals to us that the use of instrumental music in Mosaic temple worship was commanded by God through the prophets.
1. Although approved during the Mosaic age, God does express displeasure with how some carried out this type of worship (Amos 5:23; 6:3-5).

IV. Under the Law of Christ Only Singing is Instructed.

A. Examples of Disciples Singing.

1. Jesus & the disciples at the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26).
2. Paul & Silas in prison (Acts 16:25).

B. Instructions About Singing.

1. Christians are to speak to one another singing (Ephesians 5:19).
2. Christians are to teach one another by singing (Colossians 3:16).
3. Christians are to sing when happy (James 5:13).
4. Singing is to be done "with the understanding" of what is being sung (I Corinthians 14:15).
5. Old Testament Scriptures referring to singing are applied to Christians (Romans 15:8,9; Heb. 2:11,12).
6. Given that mechanical instruments in worship played such an important role in Old Testament worship, the total lack of any instruction to use them in the New Testament is conspicuous, compelling and very significant.

C. There is no example or instruction of Christians worshipping God with mechanical instruments of Music under the Law of Christ.

1. The only New Testament references to mechanical instruments of music refer to conditions in heaven, not the worship of Christians on earth in this age (Revelation 15:2,3).

Conclusion. There is no authority under the Law of Christ to worship God with mechanical instruments of music. To do so would be to act presumptuously and without authority. Such action is always condemned. Christians are commanded to sing in worship to God. We must do so fervently, diligently and from the heart.