Does God Care How We Worship?

Steve Wolfgang

17 May 2018

Glen Burnie, MD

Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26

- **And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.**

Questions

- ✓ Does it matter what music we use?
- ✓ Why has Biblical teaching not been respected? If it is so clear, why do so many people not "get it?"
- ✓ How do changes in styles of instrumental music (from pianos and organs, argued as "aids" to singing, to professional praise teams and "Christian rock bands") alter the nature of the discussion?
- ✓ Does the change of instruments change the nature of the activity from worship to entertainment?

Minority Position

As several historians of music have noted, "Our current situation in which there is a widespread and often unquestioning acceptance of instruments in worship is '*a minority position* in the church's whole history.'

Calvin Stapert, "Historical and Theological Perspectives on Musical instruments in Worship," in Robert Webber, ed. *Music and the Arts in Christian Worship* (1st ed.; Nashville, TN: Star Song Publishing Group, 1994), Vol. 4, pp. 387–393. The quotation is from Paul Westermeyer, "Instruments in Christian Worship," *Reformed Liturgy and Music* 25:3 (Summer 1991), 111.

Majority Position

The very term used in musical circles for unaccompanied singing sums up the evidence of church history. *A cappella* comes from the Latin by way of Italian and is used to mean "as is done in the church." The classical form of church music is unaccompanied song. To abstain from the use of the instrument is not a peculiar aberration of "a frontier American sect:" this was easily, *until comparatively recent times, the majority tradition* of Christian history.

Everett Ferguson, *A Cappella Music in Worship*

Majority Position

To abstain from the use of the instrument is not a peculiar aberration of "a frontier American sect:" this was easily, until comparatively recent times, the majority tradition of Christian history. Virtually no one has said it is wrong to worship *a cappella*, whereas many have thought instrumental music in worship is wrong. It may not appear to be true today, but against the whole sweep of Christian history *a cappella* music is the truly ecumenical ground to occupy. Everett Ferguson, ***A Cappella Music in Worship***

Majority Position

This was easily, until comparatively recent times, the majority tradition of Christian history….
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Everett Ferguson, *A Cappella Music in Worship*

Instrumental Music "Defended"

- ✓ Not Forbidden
- ✓ Used in the Old Testament
- ✓ Will Be In Heaven
- ✓ Expedient
- ✓ Used at Home
- ✓ Prophesied in Old Testament
- ✓ "Psallo" Requires

Case Study

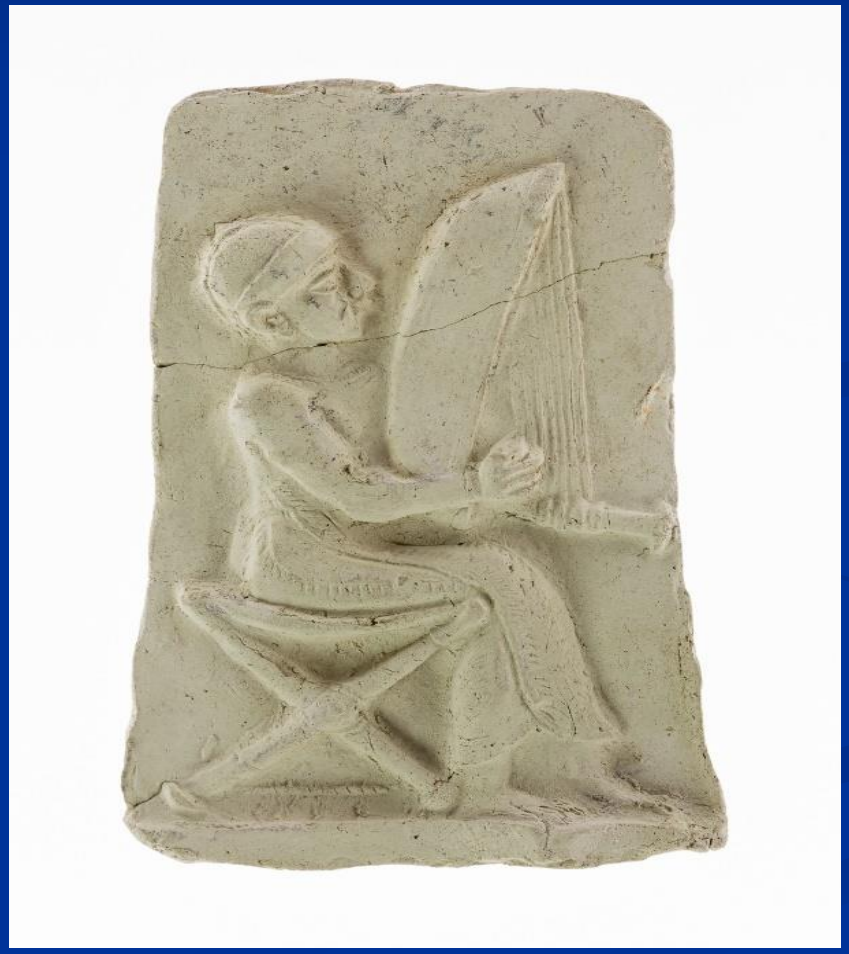
- ✓ ***"I'm Fed Up With Bad Church Music"***
  FaceBook group – December 2017
  40 respondents, 30-page printout
- ✓ "It's weird"/unfamiliar/minority view
- ✓ David did it
- ✓ Straining after gnats – unimportant
- ✓ Hermeneutical inconsistency – lead glass, microphones, etc

What Do We Know?

(1) the amount of knowledge available to the ancients about, and widespread use of, musical instruments in antiquity and continuing to the Second Temple Judaism in the Greco-Roman era and beyond;

Babylonian Harpist

ca. 2000-1600 BC (OIM 9345)



Great Lyre Soundbox
Royal Tombs of Ur

Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, Fall 2000

Excavated by Sir Leonard Wooley
British Museum and
University of Pennsylvania

What Do We Know?

(2) the detailed information recorded about the authorized use of instrumental music in the Old Testament;

Old Testament Worship: Instruments Authorized

- ✓ Numbers 10:2, 10
- ✓ Psalm 81:1-4
- ✓ 1 Chronicles 25:5-7
- ✓ 1 Chronicles 28:11-21 (9, 11, 19)
- ✓ 2 Chronicles 5:11-14
- ✓ 2 Chronicles 29:25-30
- ✓ Amos 5:21-22, 6:1, 5

Amos 5:23

Take away from me the noise of your songs;

for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.

Amos 6:1,5

Woe to them *that are* at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, *which are* named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

5 That chant to the sound of the viol, *and* invent to themselves instruments of music, like David

Amos 5:21-22

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.
22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept *them*: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

Numbers 10:2

Make two trumpets of silver; of hammered work you shall make them: and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for having the camps set out.

Numbers 10:10

Also in the day of your gladness, and in your appointed feasts, and on the first days of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a reminder [memorial] of you before your God: I *am* the LORD your God.

Psalm 81:1-4

Sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. *2* **Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute.** *3* **Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day.** *4* ***For this is a statute for Israel, A law of the God of Jacob.***

NKJV

Temple Instruments

- David gave Solomon "the plan" for the Temple – *1 Chronicles 28:11-21*
- He admonished his son to be careful to serve God "with a whole heart and a willing mind" – *vv 9,11*
- *"All this the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, all the details of this pattern" – v19*

NASB

Temple Instruments

- ✓ Solomon brought the ark into the Temple
- ✓ Accompanied by instrumental music: the trumpets and the instruments of David – *2 Chronicles 5:11-14*
- ✓ The temple was filled with cloud, "*for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God*" – *v14*

Temple Instruments

- ✓ Singing Levites, "with cymbals, harps, and lyres," stood "with 120 priests who were trumpeters
- ✓ Trumpeters and singers were to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD" – *2 Chronicles 5:12-14*
- ✓ To "sing in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, for the service of the house of God" and were "trained in singing" – *1 Chronicles 25:5-7*, NASB

2 Chronicles 29:25-26

And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: *for so was the commandment of the LORD* by his prophets. *26* And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

2 Chronicles 29:27-28

And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began *also* with the trumpets, and with the instruments *ordained* by David king of Israel. *28* the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: *and* all *this continued* until the burnt offering was finished.

What Makes It Right?

- ✓ In the Old Testament,
  God commanded it
- ✓ In the New Testament,
  it would be right –
  <u>if</u> God commanded it

Leviticus 8:4-5,13,21,29,34,36
Leviticus 9:6-7, 21,23

"Did all the things which the Lord had commanded through Moses"

Leviticus 10:3

"By those who come near me

I will be regarded as holy"

Nadab and Abihu

The story of Nadab and Abihu is interesting both because of its brevity and because of the sternness and uniqueness of the judgment on them… God had carefully shown the way by which the Israelites might atone for their sins and maintain a right relationship with himself. The distinctions between holy and unholy, clean and unclean, had been clearly demonstrated by God to Aaron and his sons, who had been instructed to teach these things to the people.

Nadab and Abihu

Nadab and Abihu, in an act of self-will, had substituted their own form of worship, obscuring the distinction between the holy (God's commands) and the common (man's self-initiated religious actions). These actions, had they not been quickly rebuked, might easily have led to the assimilation of personal pagan practices in the worship of God.

Henry A. Virkler and Karelynne Gerber Ayayo, ***Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*** (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 195, 197

Nadab and Abihu

A second lesson is found in the fact that reconciliation with God depends on the grace of God, not on man's self-willed and self-initiated practices. The means of reconciliation and atonement had been given by God. Nadab and Abihu attempted to add something to God's means of reconciliation. As such they stand as an example to all people and all religions that substitute their own actions for God's grace as the means of reconciliation and salvation.

Henry A. Virkler and Karelynne Gerber Ayayo, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 195, 197

Old Testament Authority In the New Testament?

- What Old Covenant practices are authorized in the New Testament?
- Burning incense in worship?
- Animal sacrifices?
- Tabernacle / temple?
- Levitical priests?
- Instrumental music?
- Priestly vestments?
- *Jesus cannot be your high priest!*

What Do We Know?

(3) the fact that musical instruments were utilized in religious worship in the Temple of the New Testament era, where Christians sometimes met;

What Do We Know?

(4) that instrumental music was known and featured in pagan worship services commonly known to Christians as well;

What Do We Know?

(5) that music in worship is discussed specifically in numerous New Testament passages;

Music in the New Testament: What Is the Evidence?

- ✓ Are instruments of music discussed frequently in the New Testament?
- ✓ Did Jesus' apostles and disciples use them regularly?
- ✓ Do we find New Testament churches using instrumental music in worship?
- ✓ Are instructions about instrumental music included in apostolic teaching?

Music in the New Testament

SING	PLAY
Matthew 26:30	
Mark 14:26	??????
Acts 16:25	
Romans 15:9	
1 Corinthians 14:15	
Ephesians 5:19	
Colossians 3:16	
Hebrews 2:12, 13:15	
James 5:13	

What Do We Know?

(6) that abundant New Testament texts give detailed instructions (time, circumstances, purposes, etc.) for other aspects of worship by Christians.

Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26

- **And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.**

Music in the New Testament

- ***1 Corinthians 14:15*** - 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.

God Spoke

- ✓ Arguments which attribute the use of a cappella music in the New Testament to early Christians' desire to differentiate themselves from Judaism (though that desire may be true) seem to sell short the divine instruction to sing
- ✓ ***God spoke; they obeyed***
- ✓ They did not simply concoct their own modes of worship without divine direction

220n44

Questions

- ✓ Several questions arise from this evidence:
- ✓ How can one account for the complete absence of instrumental music in the New Testament texts regarding worship?
- ✓ Why is there no example of Jesus ever worshiping with an instrument?
- ✓ Or instructing others to do so?
- ✓ Why is there no record of the apostles following such instructions, or teaching others to do so?

Questions

- ✓ Why are there no instances whatsoever of any churches worshiping with instrumental accompaniment in the book of Acts?
- ✓ Why are the instructions provided in the New Testament epistles totally lacking not only of instructions for the use of instrumental music in texts which address music in worship – but even of a bare mention or even a hint?
- ✓ ***Why the thunderous silence?***

More Questions

- A related question is: what explains the continuing absence of any endorsement, or even an account, of instrumental music in the worship of Christians in the centuries following the birth of Christianity and the completion of the New Testament?

More Questions

- ✓ As the evidence of church history demonstrates, there are no clear, incontrovertible references to the use of instruments by those claiming to be Christians for nearly a millennium – 1,000 years of church history – after the first century A.D.

Church History: Uniform Opposition

- "The antagonism which the fathers of the early church displayed toward instruments has two outstanding characteristics: vehemence and uniformity."

- J. McKinnon, "The Meaning of the Patristic Polemic Against Musical Instruments," *Current Musicology* 1 (1965) 69. For fuller explication of these themes, see also McKinnon's *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge University Press 1989).

Silence, or Explicit Statements?

- "The conclusion that the early church did not employ instrumental music in worship ***does not rest, however, on inferences from silence. There are explicit statements from early Christian writers to the effect that Christians did not use instrumental music.*** Lest anyone be misled by citations which might imply a use of instrumental music in the church, I cite here some of the explicit evidence against such use."
- Everett Ferguson, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (4th ed., Desert Willow Publishing 2013), Logos ed., p. 63.

Evidence?
Or Mistranslations?

- ✓ **"many musicologists, while acknowledging that the early Church music was predominantly vocal, have tried to produce evidence that instruments were employed in the liturgy at various times and places. The result of such attempts has been *a history of misinterpretations and mistranslations.*"**

- ✓ **James McKinnon, *"The Church Fathers and Musical Instruments"* (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1965), Abstract p. 2.**

Where is the Counter-Evidence?

- ✓ Certainly no one has successfully countered McKinnon's conclusions or the weight of the historical evidence which demonstrates that the New Testament pattern of vocal music alone continued for roughly a millennium, accompanied by intense opposition to any introduction of instrumental music into the worship of churches.

Organs … about 1000 to 1300

- "Precisely when instruments began to be used in Christian worship remains unclear … the organ was the first instrument to appear. It was ***introduced about 1000 to 1300 and only gradually became universal.***"

- Paul Westermeyer, ***Te Deum: The Church and Music*** (Augsburg Fortress 1998), p. 120.

Those Who Will Not See

- ✓ Biblical texts addressing the issue of those who do not "see it" despite sufficient evidence include
- ✓ Matthew 12:9–14, 22–42
- ✓ Luke 16:27–31
- ✓ John 10:24–42
- ✓ Romans 1:18–32

Matthew 12:13-14

[13] Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. [14] But the Pharisees went out and *conspired against Him*, *as to* how they might destroy Him.

Matthew 12:22-24

Then a demon-possessed man *who was* blind
and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed
him, so that the mute man spoke and saw.
23 All the crowds were amazed, and were saying,
"This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"
24 But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said,
"This man ***casts out demons only by Beelzebul***
the ruler of the demons."

Matthew 12:38-40

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." [39] But He answered and said to them, "*An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah* the prophet; [40] for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Matthew 12:41-32

The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they *repented at the preaching of Jonah*; and behold, *something greater than Jonah is here*.
[42] *The* Queen of *the* South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, *something greater than Solomon is here*.

Clear?

- ✓ Jesus performs miracles in their presence
- ✓ Easily verified
- ✓ Issue is not quantity or quality of miracles
- ✓ Rather, resistance to His message
- ✓ Others accept the truth with “less” evidence

Luke 16:27-29

And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house – [28] for I have five brothers – in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' [29] But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

Luke 16:30-31

[30] But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ [31] But he said to him, ‘*If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.*’”

John 10:24-26

The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? ***If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.***"
25 Jesus answered them, "***I told you, and you do not believe***; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. ***26*** But ***you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.***

John 10:27-30

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and ***they follow Me***; [28] and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. [29] My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. [30] I and the Father are one."

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[31] The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

John 10:31-33

**The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.
[32] Jesus answered them, "I showed you many
good works from the Father; *for which of them
are you stoning Me?*" [33] The Jews answered Him,
"For a good work we do not stone You, but for
blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make
Yourself out *to be* God."**

John 10:37-39

If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; [38] but if I do them, *though you do not believe Me, believe the works*, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." [39] Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

John 10:40-42

And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. [41] Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet *everything John said about this man was true*." [42] Many believed in Him there.

Romans 1:18-19

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, [19] because *that which is known about God is evident* within them; for *God made it evident to them.*

Romans 1:20-21

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that ***they are without excuse***.
[21] For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks,

Romans 1:21-23

but they became futile in their speculations,
and *their foolish heart was darkened*.
[22] Professing to be wise, they became fools,
[23] and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible
God for an image in the form of corruptible
man and of birds and four-footed animals and
crawling creatures.

Is It Clear?

- ✓ God made it “evident to them”
- ✓ His truth is “clearly seen”
- ✓ They are “without excuse”
- ✓ “Professing to be wise,
  they became fools”

Is God Obligated?

- ✓ Should He give us proof so overwhelmingly spectacular that no one could possibly deny it?
- ✓ Must He perform works so impressive that even those who wish to be unbelievers are forced to accept them?

Conviction or Tradition?

- ✓ **The fact that the use of instrumental music has been a minority position does not necessarily mean that all those who did not use instruments understood why, or could state a Biblical case to support their practice.**

"Our Tradition"

- ✓ One need look no farther than many present-day "Churches of Christ" to find examples of such ignorance and, too often, apathy. Tradition has its own powerful inertia. For many today, "tradition" seems to be the only motivation for many lax and lackadaisical religious practices.

Is It That Important?

- ✓ **"I can't say someone who uses instrumental music is going to hell."**
- ✓ **God does not ask me, or anyone else, to decide another person's eternal destiny.**
- ✓ **What should concern all of us are attitudes regarding presumptuous behaviors.**

Is It That Important?

- ✓ Offering to God as worship any activity, about which He said nothing, and declaring that just as pleasing and acceptable as what He *did* authorize, ought to be a fearfully frightening attitude to Christians.
- ✓ To say, or even leave an impression, that it is acceptable for someone to continue to engage in behaviors for which the best thing that can be said is "God did not condemn it outright" is to lend aid and comfort to someone walking on the edge of a spiritual cliff.

Is It That Important?

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Is It That Important?

- ✓ Introducing activities in the worship of holy God, for which the only "authority" is:
- ✓ "I don't think it's so bad" or
- ✓ "I can't see a good reason not to"
- ✓ skates on very thin ice, and is even more spiritually hazardous.

Why Not Use Instrumental Music?

- ✓ Not Authorized in NT (Differs from OT: *Hebrews 8-10, Romans 7*)
- ✓ Not used by the early church
- ✓ Not consistent with spiritual worship
  - ❖ *John 4:24, Hebrews 13:15*
- ✓ Origins in pagan/Judaistic rituals (the heart as the NT instrument)
- ✓ Historically, produces division

Midway College

Christian Church
Midway, KY

Dr. L.L. Pinkerton and Melodeon

Record Book

Midway, KY
"Church of Christ"

to 1895

A Cappella Music

Eastern Orthodox worship for the most part continues to use only vocal music. In the Western church as well, the use of instruments has been opposed from time to time, both before and since the 16th century Reformation. Until recently, a fairly large number of evangelical groups in America (e.g., the Free Methodist Church, primitive Baptists, old Mennonites, and certain Presbyterian bodies) perpetuated the "no instrument" practice, but the antagonism is waning.

A Cappella Music

Until recently, a fairly large number of evangelical groups in America (e.g., the Free Methodist Church, primitive Baptists, old Mennonites, and certain Presbyterian bodies) perpetuated the "no instrument" practice, but the antagonism is waning. At the present time, the prohibition is most conspicuously continued and defended by certain Churches of Christ, whose leaders argue that they must adhere strictly to what the New Testament authorizes.

Donald Hustad, ***Jubilate! Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition*** (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1981), 42.

Outline

- ✓ Music in
  - ✓ In New Testament worship
  - ✓ In Old Testament worship
  - ✓ In post-New Testament centuries
  - ✓ In "modern" times
- ✓ Why the changes?
- ✓ Why don't more people today "see" it?

Why Is It Important?

- ✓ Authority Question
- ✓ Fellowship Question
- ✓ Salvation Question?
- ✓ What Has God Said?