

Why No Musical Instruments in Praise-Worship?

- True worship consists of reverential acts authorized by God, that are directed to him and that are performed to honour him or his name (Ps 96.9; Jn 4.24).
- Musical instruments were only used in worship when associated with animal sacrifices (2 Sam 6.13-18; 1 Chron 15.14-28; 16.37-42; 2 Chron 5.6-14; 7.1-6; 29.25-28; 30.13-27; Neh 12.36-43).
- Psalms that mention musical instruments must be understood in the context of animal sacrifices (e.g., 27.6; 43.4). All of them were written at the time the temple form of worship established by David was operable, and they often refer to other ceremonial rituals such as binding sacrifices to the alter (118.27) and offering sacrifices (4.5; 20.3; 51.19; 54.6; 66.13, 15; 107.22) which also ended.
- Only priests and Levites were authorized by God to play musical instruments in the context of worship (1 Chron 15.16-24; 2 Chron 5.12-13; Ezra 3.10; Neh 12.35-36). The Levitical priesthood has ended.
- After Solomon's temple was destroyed, the Jews did not use musical instruments to accompany singing of the Psalms in worship. The Levites did not perform their liturgical duties—they hung up their harps (Ps 137.2)—while in captivity in Babylon as there were no sacrifices being offered.
- At the time of Jesus, when the Jews met for worship in their synagogues outside the temple, they did not use instruments.
- When the temple was destroyed in 70 AD, the sacrificial system ended—including all that was associated with it, (e.g., sacrifices, incense, and use of musical instruments).
- There is no example in the NT of instruments being used in congregational worship and no command to do so. References to musical instruments in Revelation (5.8; 14.2; 15.2) use imagery taken from the temple that was still in existence when John wrote.
- Musical instruments were excluded from worship in early NT congregations. Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Athanasius, and John Chrysostom all spoke against their use because they knew that they were from the temple liturgy and associated with the sacrifices that had ended with the final sacrifice of Jesus.
- Missionaries (e.g., Columba) brought the Gospel to northern Europe without using instruments. Preaching/teaching is God's means of evangelism, not musical performances (Mt 28.19; Jn 5.24-25; 10.3, 16; Rom 10.14-15; 1 Cor 1.18-21; Titus 1.1-3).
- Musical instruments were introduced into worship services during the Middle Ages but were not universally accepted by all churches.
- Reformed churches rejected the use of musical instruments. John Calvin wrote: "To sing the praises of God upon the harp and psaltery, unquestionably formed a part of the training of the law and of the service of God under that dispensation of shadows and figures, but they are not now to be used in public thanksgiving." (comments on Ps 71.22)
- We worship the way Jesus did. He went to Jerusalem for the annual feasts at the temple, where musical instruments were used in association with the animal sacrifices; but these have ceased since he finished his work on the cross. At other times, Jesus worshipped in the Synagogues (Mk 6.2; Lk 4.16) where no musical instruments were used.
- Worship is to be "a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name" (Heb 13.15). The human heart and voice alone are to render praise-worship to God.