

In this tract, I will examine the most common arguments that others use to justify the use of musical instruments in their worship service. I recommend that you read my other tract called, “The Truth about Singing” as well.

**Some people like to say, “The New Testament doesn’t specifically say that you can’t use musical instruments, therefore it’s acceptable to use them.”**

In other words, they want a verse that says, “Do not use musical instruments.” Using this logic, a person could engage in all kinds of sin because the Bible doesn’t specifically say many things. For instance, it doesn’t specifically say I can’t smoke weed or snort cocaine up my nose. So, based on their logic it should be acceptable for me to engage in these behaviors because they are not specifically forbidden. However, what many people don’t understand is that the Bible does specifically teach against their use, and these are the verses that do it.

**Eph.5:<sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,**

**Colossians 3:16 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.**

When the Word of God commands us to sing and names the instrument as our heart, He has excluded everything else including musical instruments because God means what He says. These same people who make this argument against these verses will not be consistent when it comes to passages they consider sacred. For instance, if you asked them if it would be acceptable to use hamburgers and lemonade for the Lord’s Supper, they would quickly say, “No,

you can’t do that!” However, the Bible doesn’t specifically say anywhere that you can’t use hamburgers or lemonade. So, based on their logic it should be acceptable to add them. Now they won’t like it when you apply their logic to the Lord’s Supper because they can understand when God said to use unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine that He excluded everything else.

Now let me show you a simple argument that is very powerful. Look at the following two verses.

**2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.**

**Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him...**

I want you to really think about this. As Christians, we must live our lives by faith, which includes our worship to God because without faith it is impossible to please God. Now notice what Paul writes to the Romans.

**Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

Do you see what Paul has taught us? He is saying where there is no Word, there can be no faith and where there is no faith, there is no pleasing God. Since the New Testament does not command us or give us an example of using musical instruments, they cannot be a part of our faith and therefore they are not pleasing to God. This is a simple argument, but it shows that musical instruments should not be used in our worship to God.

Please notice the chart below that shows the difference between using an instrument and using the voice. This will help us decide which one can follow the commands in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16.

The Bible Commands	The voice	The instrument
Speak in song Eph. 5:19	Can	Cannot
Teach Col. 3:16	Can	Cannot
Admonish Col 3:16	Can	Cannot
Make melody in the heart Eph. 5:19	Can	Cannot

As you can see, the voice can obey these commands because it can form intelligible words. However, the instrument cannot follow any of these commands because all it can do is make noise. This shows us that musical instruments should not be used in our worship to God.

**Another argument made is that using a musical instrument isn’t any different from using songbooks or a song leader.**

So, they would say an instrument is simply an aid and not an addition. Let’s begin by defining these words.

An aid is something used that doesn’t make a change to a command. An addition is something that is added and does change the command. For instance, when we use different dishes to transport the Lord’s Supper, these dishes are aids and do not change the Lord’s Supper. However, if we add hamburgers and lemonade to the Lord’s Supper, then an addition has occurred that has changed the command of God.

A song leader or songbooks are aids. The song leader chooses the song and starts it. The songbooks contain the words that we are singing. In both of the instances only singing is occurring, so the command to sing has not been changed. However, when we add a musical instrument that is being played, something other than singing is occurring. So, musical instruments are an addition and not an aid.

**Another argument is made from the Greek word ‘Psallo’ used in Eph 5:19, Col 3:16, Rom. 15:9 and 1Cor. 14:15.**

They will say that Psallo means to play on a stringed instrument, and so we should use an instrument in our worship to God. I agree that the word “Psallo” at one point carried the meaning of playing a musical instrument. However, we must realize that a word can go through many changes as it goes through history. Most of us have seen how words can change meaning in our lifetimes. For instance, 30 to 40 years ago it was common for people to say, “I am gay,” which simply meant they were happy. However, today this word has an entirely different meaning. That is why it is important that we find out what the word “Psallo” meant during the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Consider the following five different meanings for the word “Psallo” I have gathered from 17 different lexicons.

1. To pluck the hair.
2. To twang the bowstring.
3. To twitch a carpenter’s line.
4. To touch the chords of a musical instrument.
5. To touch the chords of the human heart, that is to sing.

What should we do with these definitions? Should we just pick and choose what we want the word “Psallo” to mean in our text? Well, let’s try that and see what happens. If we choose number 1, does this mean we should do like Nehemiah (Neh. 13:25) and pluck each others hair out during worship? Perhaps we should twang a bowstring or twitch a carpenter’s line in our worship to God. I don’t know of anybody that would do this. This is why it is important to find out what the meaning of Psallo was during the New Testament time.

How do we decide which definition they used during the 1<sup>st</sup> century? We have to go to the

# Answering Arguments For The Use Of Musical Instruments

experts that have studied the language during this time and see what they have discovered. One Greek expert named Sophocles who was a native Greek and taught Greek for 38 years at Harvard University took on the daunting task of examining the Roman Period and beyond, which covered 146 B.C. to A.D. 1100. He examined over 594 authors during this 1200-year period and he declares that not one single example of Psallo throughout this period of time can be found involving or implying the use of an instrument. Instead, every time it was found it meant to chant or sing a religious hymn.

Many other scholars have come to this same conclusion including those who have translated our Bibles into the English language. Every version of the Bible I have ever read never translates this Greek word “Psallo” as meaning to pluck a musical instrument. The reason this never occurs is because the word “Psallo” in the New Testament period only meant to sing or chant.

Since most of the words in Eph 5:19 and Col. 3:16 are in plural form, this means that everyone is commanded to sing. So, if the word “Psallo” means to play a musical instrument in these verses, then everyone would have play an instrument and sing or they would violate this passage. When have you ever seen or heard of a denomination where every person sings and plays at the same time? Never! This shows how inconsistent they are with the scriptures.

**Another argument people like to make is since it was acceptable to use musical instruments in the Old Testament it should be acceptable to use them in the New Testament.**

People who try to use this argument fail to understand that we are no longer under the Law of Moses. When Jesus died on the cross, He nailed the requirements of that Law to the cross

putting it to death (Col. 2:14). He created a new covenant (Heb. 8:13, 9:15, 12:24), which means nothing under the Old Testament is binding on the Christian unless it is restated in the New Testament. This means we cannot use things that were acceptable under the old covenant to justify their use under the new covenant. The New Testament is our only authority. Those who use this argument will not remain consistent because if you can bring over musical instruments (2 Chr. 29:25) from the Law of Moses, then logically you can bring everything over including animal sacrifices (Ex. 20:14) and putting adulterers to death (Lev. 20:10). This should be enough to prove that this argument cannot justify the use of musical instruments.

**One last argument people like to make comes from the book of Revelation.**

**Revelation 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.**

They will say, “See, there are instruments in heaven, therefore it’s acceptable for us to use musical instruments in our worship to God.” This is just another desperate attempt and abuse of the scriptures. Revelation is a symbolic book talking about a beast with multiple horns, a sea of glass and burning of incense. So, a person should be careful of how they use the book of Revelation. In fact, in our text if we are going to take the harps as being literal, then we must also take the lamb as being literal and the golden bowls of incense as being the literal prayers of the saints. These things are obviously symbolic, which means the harps are also symbolic.

Another way to look at this is to apply their logic to other passages. According to Mt. 22:30

there is no marriage in heaven. So, if we are to use musical instruments because they are used in heaven, then it follows that we should not be marrying here on the earth because there is no marriage in heaven. This is the logical conclusion we would have to come to using their logic. This shows how weak their argument is.

In conclusion, I have examined the most common arguments people use to justify the use of musical instruments in their worship to God. I have shown that none of these arguments will standup against the New Testament scriptures because they only authorize us to sing to God. I encourage you to search the scriptures to see if what I have presented is true.

If you have any questions or comments e-mail me at [lgchurchofchrist@cableone.net](mailto:lgchurchofchrist@cableone.net).



**By: Cougan Collins**