

Can we play Instruments in the Church?

1. There are four Greek words used in the New Testament in association with singing and musical instruments: PSALMS, HYMNS, MELODIES, AND SONGS.

A. THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS WAS INSTRUCTED TO USE ALL FOUR GREEK WORDS WHEN IT CAME TO SINGING!

(1) Paul told the Church in Ephesians 5:19 to: “Speak to one another with psalms (PSALMOS), hymns (HUMNOS) and spiritual songs (ODE). Sing and make music (PSALLO) in your heart to the Lord.”

2. PSALM, which is the Greek word PSALMOS, which translates: “*primarily denotes as striking or twitching with the finger on musical strings; then, sacred song sung to musical accompaniment; a psalm. It is used of the Old Testament Book of Psalms.*”

A. King David wrote most of the Psalms, and he wrote them to be sung with musical accompaniment (remember, he played the harp according to *I Samuel 16:14-23*).

B. The Psalms even name the different instruments they used in *Psalms 150*: The *harp, lyre, tambourine, strings, flute, and cymbals*.

C. According to *Acts 2*, the first 3,000 Christians were all Jews. Do you really think they left their instruments at home when they came together to worship?

D. The Apostle Paul (who was “*the Apostle to the Gentiles*” according to *Romans 11:13*), said even the Gentile Churches used “*psalms*” (singing songs with musical accompaniment) as part of their worship services:

(1) Ephesians 5:19: “Speak to one another with psalms (PSALMOS)...”

(2) Colossians 3:15,16: “...and as you sing psalms (PSALMOS)...”

(3) I Corinthians 14:26: “...When you come together, everyone has a hymn (PSALMOS)...”

3. MELODY, or SING, which is the Greek word PSALLO, which translates: “*primarily to twitch, twang, then, to play a stringed instrument with the fingers...to sing with a harp...in the New Testament, to sing a hymn, sing praise; in Ephesians 5:19, ‘making melody.’ Elsewhere it is rendered ‘sing,’ Romans 15:9; I Corinthians 14:15; in James 5:13, ‘let him sing praise’.*”

A. Ephesians 5:19: “Speak to one another (or, the King James Version says “to yourselves”) with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. **Sing and make music** (or King James Version: **melody, or PSALLO**) in your heart to the Lord.”

(1) **Most non-instrumentalists rely on this Scripture.** In the King James version it says: “Speaking to **yourselves** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and **making melody (music) in your heart to the Lord.**”

B. However, Paul also wrote in Romans 15:9: “So that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: ‘For this reason I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will **sing (PSALLO)** to your Name’.”

(1) Here the same man who wrote **Ephesians 5:19**, Paul, whom non-instrumentalists quote as saying we should not sing with instruments in the Church, says he will sing praises among the Gentiles, so that they might also glorify God (**singing with instruments as the word PSALLO indicates**).

C. Furthermore, Paul clarified in I Corinthians 14:15-17: “...I will **sing (PSALLO)** with my spirit, but I will also **sing (PSALLO)** with my mind. If you are praising God with your spirit (singing in an unknown tongue or language), how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand (the tongue or language you are singing in), say ‘Amen’ to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified (especially if he can not hear or understand you).”

(1) Here, Paul, **again, emphasizes that we should not only sing with our spirit (or, “in your heart,” according to Ephesians 5:19), but with our mind, so those around us can understand what we are singing.**

D. James 5:13: “Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him **sing songs of praise (PSALLO).**”

(1) When you’re happy, do you sing only in your heart, or also with your tongue?

3. HYMN, which is the Greek word HUMNOS, which translates: “denotes a song of praise addressed to God (English, **hymn**), **Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16...The psalmos** denoted that which had a musical accompaniment; the **ode** (English, **ode**) was the generic term for a song; hence the accompanying adjective ‘spiritual’.”

A. Ephesians 5:19: “Speak to one another (**King James Version** says “speaking to yourselves”) with psalms, **hymns (HUMNOS)**, and spiritual songs.”

(1) As already noted, the non-instrumentalist use this Scripture to prove that all such singing is only in your heart, and not played, or sung out loud in a worship service. **Remember, if you're going to use this Scripture to prove that you cannot play musical instruments out loud, but only in your heart; then neither can you sing out loud (but only in your heart)!**

B. However, when you read Paul's same command in *Ephesians 5:19* that he wrote to the Colossians in *Colossians 3:16*; the King James Version says: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms (PSALMOS) and hymns (HUMNOS) and spiritual songs (ODE), singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*"

(1) Can you "*teach and admonish*" one another silently? It sounds like here that Paul only meant for the *grace* to be in your hearts as you sing to one another.

4. SONG, which is the Greek word *ODE*, which translates: "*an ode, song, is always in the New Testament in praise of God or Christ; in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 the adjective 'spiritual' is added, because the word in itself is generic and might be used of songs anything but spiritual; in Revelation 5:9 and 14:3 and 15:1-3 the descriptive word is 'new.'*"

A. Ephesians 5:19: "*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (ODE).*"

B. Colossians 3:16: "*...as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (ODE)...*"

C. Revelation 5:7-9: "*He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb (Christ). Each on had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (New Testament Christians). And they sang a new song (ODE)...*"

(1) They sing in Heaven, **with harps (musical instruments)**; not the old songs of the Old Testament, but the **new songs of the New Testament), to Christ**, before His throne!

D. Revelation 14:1-3: "*Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb (Christ), standing on Mount Zion (Heaven), and with Him 144,000 who had His name (Christians) and His Father's Name (Israel) written on their foreheads. I heard a sound from Heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. **The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.** And they sang a new song (ODE) before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders (remember *Revelation 5:7-9?*). No one could learn the **song (ODE)** except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth (New Testament Christians who go to Heaven).*"

(1) It can't be made any clearer, that when we finally die and go to Heaven as New Testament Christians, we will sing to musical accompaniment!

E. Revelation 15:1-3: “ *I saw in Heaven another great and marvelous sign...I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given to them by God, and sang the song (ODE) of Moses (Old Testament)...and the song (ODE) of the Lamb (New Testament).*”

(1) Whether you are reading from the New International Version, the King James, or the original Greek manuscript: **GOD, HIMSELF, PERSONALLY APPROVES OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT; AND, WHEN WE GET TO HEAVEN, GOD MAY PERSONALLY GIVE US INSTRUMENTS TO PLAY WHILE WE SING BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT SONGS IN WORSHIP TO HIM!**

6. There is no command that we *must* sing with instruments, and there is no command that we *must not* sing with instruments; therefore, it is a “disputable matter,” which falls under the guidelines of *Romans 14*:

*“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters (like whether or not we should use instruments in the Church). One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything (plays the instruments) **must not look down on him who does not** (non-instrumentalist), **and the man who does not eat everything** (non-instrumentalist) **must not condemn the man who does** (plays instruments), *for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.**

*One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. **Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.** He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. **He who eats meat** (or plays instruments), **eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains** (or does not play instruments), **does so to the Lord, and gives thanks to God.** For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*

*For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. **You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.** It is written:*

‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘Every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God.’ So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

***Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another.** Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. **As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food** (or instrument) **is unclean in itself. But, if anyone regards something as unclean** (such as instruments in Church), **then for him it is unclean.** If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by*

your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good (like instruments) to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking (or playing or not playing instruments), but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food (or instruments). All food is clean (so are the instruments), but it is wrong for a man to eat anything (or play anything) that causes someone else to stumble (certain types of music, like rap, rock, or country music?). It is better not to eat meat or drink wine, or to do anything else (including music) that will cause your brother to fall.

So whatever you believe about these things (like worshiping with or without instruments) keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves (like musical instruments in the Church will send you to Hell). But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats (or plays the instruments even though he thinks it is wrong for him to do), because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.”

A. If the New Testament Scriptures don't specifically tell you (Scripture and verse) if playing and or singing a particular song is right or wrong, then, after prayer, you must go with your Holy Spirit feelings. If you have doubts, and cannot find anything in the Bible that would change those doubts about how you are feeling, then the Spirit is telling you that it is wrong for you; and, therefore, it would be a sin for you to go against those doubts or feelings.

7. So, whether you play instruments in the Church or not...it's up to you. Read all the Scriptures, and then ask the Lord what you should or should not do. Once you make your decision, keep it to yourself, without making judgments on those who feel differently. But, remember: THEY DID USE INSTRUMENTS IN WORSHIPING CHRIST AND GOD, IN BOTH THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENTS...AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY... THEY USED INSTRUMENTS TO WORSHIP IN HEAVEN!