

Question: Why don't churches of Christ enrich their worship to God in song with musical instruments? (Part 1)

First, to “enrich” something is to make it better than it was before. In whose estimation is worship “enriched” by the above method? Is it man’s opinion or God’s decree that talented musicians and musical instruments “enrich” worship? Open your Bibles at let us study this subject together.

Our last three articles established the fact that New Testament (NT) Christians are not subject to the customs and laws of the Old Testament. They are to heed the words of Jesus Christ, “*Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you,*” the apostle Peter said, quoting Moses (*Ac 3:22*).

What, if anything, has Jesus said about the subject of this article? All there is to believe about Jesus Christ, and from Him, is written in our New Testaments (*Jn 20:30-31; 1Jn 1; 2Jn 9*). Every single NT reference to “enriching” worship in song pertains to singing only. Look up these references, (*Mt 26:30; Ac 16:25; Ro 15:9; 1Co 14:15; Ep 5:19; Co 3:16; He 2:12; Js 5:13*).

Jesus stated the law of worship for Christians in *Jn 4:23-24*. “*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.*” What is truth? The word of the Father is truth (*Jn 17:17*). Jesus is the truth (*Jn 14:6*). Neither He nor the apostles hinted that musical instruments improve worship to God. They never indicated that song worship is “enriched” when musical talents are used other than the spirit (mind) and voice of a child of God.

The NT speaks of a “*vain*” sort of worship. Jesus said vain worship is when people teach and observe the commandments of men (*Mt 15:9*). In the context of this verse, the religious leaders of Jesus’ day complained because His disciples did not wash their hands before eating. The Pharisees believed this tradition to be an act of service to God. However, God never commanded this to be done. Can we not make the connection between this example and the subject of the article? Instrumental music in worship to God falls into the category of “*vain*” (empty) worship because it originated with man and not with God.

Someone may ask, “Is there really anything wrong with washing one’s hands before eating? Morally, no, but as a required service to God, yes. An activity can be morally right and yet not be a required action of worship to God. For example, it is morally right to eat breakfast, but it is wrong to establish this as an action of worship to God. It is morally right to apply water to an infant’s body to bathe it, but it is wrong to do so as a religious rite or action of worship to God. It may be morally right to play an instrument of music, but it is “*vain*” to do so in worship to God.

There is another important side to this issue. True worship is done “*in spirit.*” For someone to refrain from using an instrument of music in worship to God is no guarantee that God will accept the worship. The spirit, mind or heart of the worshipper must be “in-tune” with His will. The heart of the obedient child of God is the instrument used to worship God. That is, even His children, when they seek to worship Him must humbly reflect upon their own lives and the character of their Father as they do so.