

Question: If the Jews under the Old Law used musical instruments in worship, what is wrong with Christians using them today?

Sabbath keeping, circumcision, burning incense, and animal sacrifices were commanded and sanctioned by God in the Old Testament (Gen 17:12; Exo 20:8; Num 16:17, 18; Psa 20:3; 51:19; 66:13, 15). Should Christians observe these laws today (Gal 5:1-4; Col 2:11-16)? Killing religious enemies and destroying their places of worship were sanctioned by God in the Old Testament (Deut 7:2-5; 13:6-18). Should we behave the same way today?

Because such things were done in the Old Testament by a physical, military kingdom does not mean that we may do them today. Paul said that the weapons of a Christian's warfare "are not carnal" or worldly weapons (2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-17). Even so, we cannot use the Old Testament to sanction the *worship* of God and His Son Jesus today.

David had seven wives and the Old Testament says he "took more" (2Sam 3:4; 5:13). Ask yourself if it would be pleasing to God for a man today to have seven or eight wives. If the Old Testament justifies musical instruments to be used in worship today, does it also justify multiple marriages (Rom 7:2-3; 1Cor 7:2; Heb 13:4)?

When folks appeal to the Old Testament to justify their use of musical instruments in worship, they admit two things: (1) They need God's approval, (2) They cannot find God's approval for its use in the New Testament. Why is that?

In Rom 7:1-7 Paul shows that Christians are "dead to the (Old Testament) law." That law said, "You shall not covet." Now, which law was it that said, "You shall not covet" (Exo 20:17)? It was the Old Testament law. But Paul said we are "dead" and "delivered from" that law. Is it wrong to covet? Yes, but it is wrong for us to covet, not because of what the Old Testament teaches, but because the New Testament commands against it (Eph 5:3-5).

Instrumental music in worship may have been sanctioned by God in the Old Testament, but we are "dead to" and "delivered from" that law. If musical instruments in worship are still authorized, where does it say so in the New Testament? In the Galatian letter, Paul warned that to seek God's approval for an act of worship or service from the Old Testament makes one "a debtor to keep the whole law." The result is that one becomes "entangled...with a yoke of bondage" having "fallen from grace" (Gal 5:1-5).

God once spoke unto men by the Old Testament prophets, but now he speaks unto us "by his Son" (Heb 1:1, 2). We no longer appeal to quaking, shaking Sinai, but unto the heavenly Mt. Zion (Heb 12:18-28). We no longer hear Moses who spoke on earth, but our Lord who speaks from heaven. The voice from the earth, the Old Testament, spoke of both incense and the instrument. The One who speaks from heaven speaks of neither.

God has always expressed His will about how men ought to worship Him. Worship under the Old Law and worship under the New Law can be shown to have been carried out differently. May we labor towards unity by learning to speak as the oracles of God (1Pet 4:11), as we search for the authority that should direct our worship today. "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph 5:19). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col 3:16). The New Testament scriptures contain no reference to "Christian worship" whereby any instrument other than the human voice was employed. History shows that men did not add the musical instrument in worship until several hundred years after the time of the apostles.

Study your Bible and search the Truth. Let us know if we can help you in your study of the Word of God. (Partly adapted from an article by Larry R. Hafley).