

What is Wrong with Worshiping God by Playing Songs?

Worship is one of the oldest activities of humans. For thousands of years, most humans have regularly made time to acknowledge that what they have is given to them by a higher being, usually called God. Some of the more unusual ways some people have worshiped is by drinking blood or sacrificing humans. Some of the more usual ways people have worshiped is by burning animals, singing, or praying. It is worth asking “Did the true God accept all kinds of worship?” and “Why did people worship in these ways?”. Then you should ask “Does the true God accept my worship?” and “Why do I worship the way I do?”. This article is going to ask these questions and apply them to the practice of worshiping God by playing songs on organs, pianos, guitars, drums, etc. The Bible will provide the answers we need.

Today, does the true God accept worship involving playing songs?

Jesus taught that worship, which once was in some ways limited to the temple in Jerusalem, could be offered in any place. He also said that God is seeking worship that is offered in spirit and truth (John 4:21, 23). Notice that since God is seeking worship and worship is offered to Him, we must be sure that He is pleased with the worship we offer.

We know that God is pleased with songs that are sung to Him for the apostle Paul sang to God and taught Christians to sing to Him (Acts 16:25; Ephesians 5:19). In 1 Corinthians 14:15, 26 it is clear that when the church gathered, they were singing. Paul’s life and words prove that God accepts singing. Other verses that show us the use of vocal music by Christians for worship include Colossians 3:16 and James 5:13. Singing is the only type of music that we read Christians offering to God in both private and public worship.

We can probably all agree that God accepts worship involving singing songs to Him. But does God accept songs that are played to Him? At one time He did. When we read the Old Testament it is clear that God accepted songs that were played, but the Old Testament is equally clear that God also accepted animal sacrifices, burning incense, and burning food and drink offerings in addition to worship by playing musical instruments. Israel knew that God accepted worship in these ways because God’s law to them proved it. But ask yourself “Am I trying to please God today by following God’s instructions to Israel?” We learn what God accepts today by studying and following the New Testament which is the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). This is where I find what kind of marriage, speech, attitude, and worship God accepts today. Because we cannot find Christians playing songs or being taught to play songs to God, the only conclusion is that like burning incense, circumcision, and burnt offerings of animals or food, some things were only accepted by God during the time of the old law. Paul called this law “a tutor” and then said “But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal. 3:23-26).

Why do you worship God by playing songs?

We might ask the ancient Mayans “Why did you worship by making children a sacrifice?”. Also, we all must ask ourselves why we worship the way we do. Here are a few reasons people today often give for worshiping God by playing songs—

1) “*The book of Psalms is full of examples and instruction to play songs to the Lord.*” This is true. For example Psalm 149:3 says “sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.” Verses 6-9

also say to praise God with “a two-edged sword in their hand to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.” This psalm is written by and for people under Moses’ law—are you following this law today? (Gal. 3:26-29)

2) *“The New Testament does not say that instrumental music is wrong, so God must still accept it today.”* This is a *huge* point. If you limit your ideas of sin only to the things God has specifically forbidden in the New Testament then would the following things be wrong: spreading grape jelly on the bread of the Lord’s Supper, mixing apple juice with the grape juice of the Lord’s Supper, or practicing polygamy? In these cases God has shown us what He approves of (unleavened bread, grape juice, one man and one woman in marriage). Anything other than these things is wrong, isn’t it? Through Christ and the apostles, God showed that He approved of Christians singing to Him, but unless He shows us that playing to Him is right, we cannot assume it is right. Yes, in some verses God gives a list of sins, but none of those verses is a complete list of all sins. For example, Paul ends the list of “the works of the flesh” by saying “...and the like” (Gal. 5:21) showing that he was not naming every single sin. Offering God worship by playing songs to Him makes us guilty of adding to the plan of worship He revealed in the New Testament.

If you worship God by playing songs for a different reason, what is your reason? We would be interested in hearing it.

Conclusion

If you have read this article, you likely are interested in pleasing God, and we are glad that you have that goal. This is our goal also. Because worship is God’s idea for man, and not man’s own invention, we must learn God’s plan for worship. We must remain within the limits God has revealed, and neither add to, nor subtract from them. Give thanks to God with the fruit of your lips and know He will be pleased (Heb. 13:15).