

# *It Is Written*

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## **Arguments I Used for the Use of Instrumental Music (When I Was a Preacher for the Christian Church)**

By Dan Goddard

Men have long been prone to go beyond the limitations of God's word in their zeal to serve Jehovah. Zeal for God is commendable when it is coupled with a knowledge of God's will; but when one allows his zeal to drive him beyond the confines of Bible teaching, it is catastrophic.

As He delivered His law to the Israelites, God said, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32). For the Israelites to keep the commandments of Jehovah was for them to observe His word without addition or subtraction. Any other course was to invite the Father's displeasure. That the same principle holds true today is shown in the following instances:

1. Paul's instruction is to "learn not to go beyond the things written" (I Corinthians 4:6).
2. Peter's admonition is to speak as the oracles of God (I Peter 4:11).
3. John's warning is that those who go onward and abide not in the teachings of Christ "hath not God" (II John 9).
4. The closing words of the Revelation letter are cited against those who would "add to" or "take away from" the words contained in "the book of prophecy" (Revelation 22:18).

In view of such perspicuous statements, it would seem that men would see the folly of going beyond God's written word. That they do not is evident in prevalent religious practices.

A case in point is the use of instruments of music in worship. Here is a common practice, yet one for which there is not a vestige of scriptural basis. Its existence depends upon going beyond God's commands.

Many advocates of instrumental music, both seeing and readily admitting there is no Bible authority for their practice, seek to justify instrumental music from other viewpoints. Let us notice some of the arguments I used to justify this unscriptural practice.

**Argument:** It is true that musical instruments in Christian worship are not mentioned in the Bible, but neither are church buildings, pews, lights, and many other things - things which we all readily accept.

**Answer:** Here is a failure to distinguish between worship and the place of worship. God has specified acts of worship, but not the place; yet, a place of worship is essential in keeping God's command to assemble. Whether it is under an oak tree or in a building equipped with pews, lights, baptistry, etc., the place of worship is authorized in the commandment to assemble (Matthew 18:20; Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25). Authority for a church house can also be found in other scriptures, but there are no such scriptures covering instrumental music in worship.

**Argument:** But you have Sunday School. The Bible does not mention this. How can you accept this, but condemn instrumental music in worship?

**Answer:** Christ said to teach, but He did not specify how (Matthew 28:19; John 4:45). Methods of teaching are left to human judgment. Sunday School or Bible Class (as we prefer to call it) is only a means of teaching. Instrumental music is not a method of doing anything God has commanded. Surely, no one will say it is a means of singing.

**Argument:** You do not object to the piano in the home. How can you use it at home, but not in

the church?

**Answer:** If one is worshipping, it is just as wrong for him to use the instrument at home in private as it is in the assembly. Anything that is morally right is permissible for the home, but only that which is commanded by God can be used in worship.

**Argument:** But all Christian life is worship. When you use the instrument at home, you are actually worshipping. When you refuse to use it in the assembly, you are being inconsistent.

**Answer:** All Christian life is service, but not all Christian life is worship. Everything that one does is to be in harmony with God's will, but not every act is an act of worship. God's word is comprehensive, governing both our everyday activities and our activities in worship. The use of "worship" in the Bible indicates that it has reference to special acts of homage. The Apostle John fell down before the angel of God in a definite act "to worship". The angel reproved him and instructed him to "worship God" (Revelation 22:8,9). This act should have been directed to God, not the angel. One is hard-pressed indeed when he bases his case on such obvious assumptions.

**Argument:** We use the instrument of music as an aid to singing.

**Answer:** Instrumental music is more than an aid. It is an addition to God's plan. Illustration: God specified gopher wood as the material out of which the ark was to be made. Suppose Noah had used cedar or pine. Such would have been a violation of God's plan. Now if God had commanded the ark to be made of wood, there would have been no violation. But He specified gopher wood. This excluded all other kinds. God has specified the kind of music to be used in worship. Instrumental music is another kind. To use it is to despise the plan of God.

**Argument:** I see no harm in it and I am going to use instruments of music regardless of what the Bible says or does not say.

**Answer:** You may not see any harm in it, but this does not mean God does not see any harm in it. Remember, our worship is to please God, not ourselves (Colossians 3:17).

Let us sing, making melody with our hearts to the Lord, as God commands (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Let us refuse to go beyond that which is written.

## It Needs No Change

By Greg Gwin

The men who wrote the Constitution of the United States have long been praised for their wisdom and foresight. The words they penned have served as the basis for the laws of this land for over 200 years, and have needed relatively few changes or additions. This is indeed remarkable when we view the governments and laws of most other nations in a constant state of change.

Far more amazing than this, is the law of Christ. Written nearly 2000 years ago, it continues today to provide us with "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). It is a "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). No change has ever been, or ever will be needed in it. Its own pages contain warnings to those who would attempt to alter its commands (Galatians 1:8,9; 2 John 9,10; Revelation 22:18,19). Let us learn to appreciate the beauty and perfection of God's word, and strive to live and worship according to its precepts.