

1. **What is worship?**

- A. Several Greek words are translated by some form of the English word "worship."
- B. The most common is *proskuneo*. *Proskuneo* is a compound word that literally means "towards kiss." *Proskuneo* properly means "to kiss the hand to [towards] one, in token of reverence ... hence among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence ... hence in the N. T. by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication" (Thayer). "Obeisance" is "a gesture or movement of the body, such as a curtsy, that expresses deference or homage" (American Heritage Dictionary).
- C. The English word "worship" means "the reverent love and devotion accorded a deity, an idol, or a sacred object ... The ceremonies, prayers, or other religious forms by which this love is expressed" (AHD).
- D. *Proskuneo* worship is not something a Christian is always doing. Rather, *proskuneo* worship requires Christians to stop their other forms of service to God and directly express their love and devotion to God through certain prescribed acts of worship. Luke 4:5-8; John 4:19-20, 22; Genesis 22:5.
- E. Admittedly, there is a sense in which all we do for God is worship (Hebrews 13:15-16; James 1:27). However, there is also a sense in which there are unique acts of worship.

2. **We must worship God in truth.** John 4:23-24.

3. **In truth means according to God's word.** John 17:17; Genesis 4:2B-5A; Leviticus 10:1-3; Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17; 14:23.

4. **We must worship God according to His Word.** 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3A; Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 Corinthians 4:6A; Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9; Matthew 15:8-9; Proverbs 14:12.

5. **Singing is clearly one way of worshipping God in truth.** Matthew 26:30; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13.

6. **There is not a single New Testament (NT) passage that authorizes Christians on earth to use instrumental music (IM) when they come together as a church to worship God.**

7. **We are distinctive today, but we haven't always been that way.**

- A. The Roman Catholic church first introduced IM into worship around A.D. 660. They didn't widely use it for several hundred years thereafter. As late as A.D. 1250 Thomas Aquinas wrote, "Instruments of music such as harps and psalteries, the church does not adopt for divine praises, lest it should seem to Judaize."
- B. Commenting on Psalm 71:22, John Calvin wrote: "To sing praises of God upon the harp and psaltery unquestionably formed a part of the training of the law and of the shadows and figures; but they are not now to be used in public thanksgiving." Commenting on Psalm 92:1, he said: "It appears that the Papists ... in employing IM cannot be said so much to imitate the practice of God's ancient people as to ape it in a senseless and absurd manner, exhibiting a silly delight in the worship of the Old Testament which was figurative, and terminated with the gospel."
- C. Most Protestant denominations did not begin using IM music in worship until the 1800's. In 1881 the general assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of America voted by a slim margin of 8 votes to remove from their "Directory of Worship" the following words: "As the use of musical instruments in the New Testament Church has no sanction in the Bible, they shall not be introduced, in any form, in any of our congregations."

8. **Arguments in defense of the use of IM.**

- A. **The Old Testament (OT) argument.** Admittedly, the OT authorizes the use of IM in worship to God. However, we are no longer under the OT. Deuteronomy 18:15-19 w/Matthew 17:1-5; 28:18-20. See also Galatians 3:19A, 24-25; 5:1-4; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:13-14, 16-17; Hebrews 7:12, 18-19; 8:7, 13; 10:9; etc. Also, if this argument was valid, we could not stop with IM. We would also have to return to the days of animal sacrifices, three annual trips to Jerusalem for three annual feasts, the Sabbath, dietary restrictions, the death penalty for stubborn and rebellious children (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), etc. It is all or nothing. Matthew 5:19.
- B. **The harps in heaven argument.**
 - 1) The use of IM in worship to God is mentioned in Revelation 5:8-10; 14:2-3; and 15:2-4.
 - 2) However, in these passages IM is being played in heaven and not on earth.
 - 3) The will of God for those in heaven is not necessarily the same as for those on earth. Compare Matthew 22:30 and 1 Corinthians 7:8-9; Luke 16:23-26 and Romans 12:20.
 - 4) If the will of God for those in heaven was the same as for those on earth, then the harp is the *only* authorized musical instrument, *each* worshipper must play a harp (Revelation 5:8-9A; 14:2B-3A; 15:2-3A), and we could not stop with the use of harps. Among other things, we would also have to incorporate into earthly worship the use of a throne, white robes, crowns of gold, lamps of fire (Revelation 4:4-5), palm branches (Revelation 7:9), a golden censer, incense, and a golden altar (Revelation 8:3).

- C. **The talent argument.** Genesis 4:2B-5. Cain had a talent for tilling the ground. He brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground, but God had no regard for Cain or his offering. Why? Cain offered what he did well, not what God had commanded.
- D. **The *psallo* argument.**
- 1) In Ephesians 5:19 the phrase “making melody” is the English translation of the Greek word *psallo*.
 - 2) According to Thayer, it originally meant “to pluck off, pull out” and then “to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang ... to touch or strike the chord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate ... and absol. to play on a stringed instrument, to play the harp, etc. ... to sing to the music of the harp.” However, by the time the NT was written *psallo* simply meant “to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song.”
 - 3) *Psallo* is found in Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15 (twice); and James 5:13. Each time it is translated “sing.” James 5:13 makes it clear that this is the appropriate translation.
 - 4) In Ephesians 5:19, Paul may have been alluding to some aspects of the earlier meanings of *psallo*. If so, the instrument to be twanged is specified and it is not a mechanical instrument of music. Rather, it is the heart. The point is that when singing we must do more than move our lips, we must also be “pulling on our heart strings.” The companion passage Colossians 3:16 confirms this meaning.
 - 5) If this isn’t the meaning of Ephesians 5:19, then everyone would all have to sing and play IM in worship.
- E. **The psalms argument.**
- 1) Some attempt to justify the use of IM by arguing that what makes a psalm different from a hymn and a spiritual song in passages like Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 is that a psalm is a song sung with instrumental accompaniment.
 - 2) Having reviewed the literature, I am convinced that no one can say with any degree of certainty what the actual differences are between psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. However, I can say with certainty that a psalm is still a psalm even when it is spoken without instrumental accompaniment. Luke 20:42-43; Acts 13:33, 35. Therefore, the premise of this argument, that instrumental accompaniment is absolutely necessary for a psalm to be a psalm, is false and the argument proves nothing.
 - 3) Also, the voice of history, as previously discussed, is in total opposition to the idea that early Christians understood Paul’s use of “making melody” (*psallo*) and “psalms” to demand the use of IM.
- F. **The silence of scriptures argument.**
- 1) The question is not, “Where does the NT say I can’t do it?” Rather, the question is, “Where does the NT say I can do it?” 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
 - 2) The NT does not authorize us to act on the true silence of God. To do so, we’d have to presume to know the mind of God and that is something we must not do. 1 Corinthians 2:11 and Deuteronomy 29:29.
 - 3) “The concealment’s of the Bible are as Divine as its revelations. Infinite wisdom was required as much to determine of what man should be ignorant as what man should know. Indeed, since, in regard to all matters connected with the unseen spiritual world, man is entirely dependent upon Divine revelation, the limits of that revelation must necessarily mark out also the domain of human ignorance, as the shores of a continent become the boundaries of a trackless and unfathomed ocean. Hence it is, that the silence of the Bible is to be revered equally with its teachings and that to intrude into things not seen and not revealed evinces the vanity of a fleshly mind as much as to misinterpret and pervert the express statements of the Scriptures” (Robert Richardson, *The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, p. 351).
 - 4) “Our worship to God is regulated by the laws of God. We have no knowledge of what is well-pleasing to God, in worship, save as God has revealed it to us. The New Testament is at once the rule and limit of our faith and worship to God. This is the distinctive difference between us and other religious bodies. Others accept the New Testament as their rule of faith, but do not make it the limit of their faith. They add other things as articles of faith and acts of worship than those contained in the Bible. We seek for things authorized, they for things not prohibited. Our rule is safe—theirs is loose and latitudinarian. Ours confines us to God’s appointments. Theirs opens the worship and service of God to whatever will please men. Our rule limits man’s worship to the exercises approved of in the Bible” (David Lipscomb, 1873).
- G. **The aid argument.** The command to sing authorizes whatever is necessary to sing, i.e. words, pitch, beat, and tempo. Aids to these ends alone are scriptural as long as they don’t violate some other principle of scripture. IM is not an aid. Rather, it is an unscriptural addition because it’s use is not essential to singing. Illustrate with using a pitch pipe for a pitch vs. using it as a harmonica for accompaniment.
- H. **The tradition argument.** Yes, a cappella singing is a tradition in the church of Christ. But, it is a tradition born out of scriptural necessity not mere expediency. The latter we can’t bind. The former we must bind.
- I. **The bad hermeneutic argument.** The old hermeneutic is scriptural, it is nothing more than common sense, and there is nothing scriptural to replace it. The new hermeneutic appears to be, “the ends justifies the means.” Moses used an unauthorized means for a good end and it cost him the land of promise. Numbers 20:8, 11-12.