

# Answering Arguments Against *A Cappella*

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*Does It Really Matter?*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. I think many of you know this story, but I would not be standing in front of you if it weren't for instrumental music.
  - 1. In fact, I would not even be in this world if it weren't for instrumental music.
  - 2. Dad was reared in the independent Christian Church and attended Kentucky Christian College in order to learn to preach for that group.
    - a. During his time in college, he began preaching for the Cornwell Christian Church in Frenchburg, Kentucky.
    - b. The piano player at that church told Dad that she had this beautiful niece whom he needed to meet.
    - c. Aunt Brenda introduced Mom & Dad, and the rest, they say, is history.
- B. Because Dad came out of error involving the instrument, instrumental music has been a subject of much study in my family & for me personally.
  - 1. Dad's parents were members of the independent Christian Church until the day they died.
  - 2. I was greatly concerned about my grandparents & I, therefore, studied this issue a great deal.
    - a. In studying the issue, there were numerous arguments I have heard & read in favor of instrumental music.
    - b. Over the next several Sunday nights, we want to explore different arguments individuals use to support the use of instrumental music in worship.
      - 1) I'm readily aware that those of us assembled this evening know the truth on the subject.
      - 2) However, as God's people, we need to know more than simply biblical truth.
        - a) We are to be able to defend biblical truth: "In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Pt 3:15).
        - b) Tonight, we want to begin "ANSWERING ARGUMENTS AGAINST A CAPPELLA" in order that we might be prepared to give a defense of biblical truth.
- C. One of the most prevalent arguments against *a cappella* music in worship is that it doesn't really make any difference.
  - 1. Granted, the New Testament is silent on the use of instrumental music in worship, but so what?
  - 2. Yes, God specifically says that he wants his people to sing in worship, but so what?
  - 3. Tonight, I wish to demonstrate that, in fact, it does make a difference whether we use instrumental music or not in our worship.
    - a. Honestly, it makes a **big** difference whether or not we use instrumental music in our worship.
    - b. It makes a difference because of GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY, GOD'S STANDARDS, & GOD'S SEVERITY.

## GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

- A. At the root of saying it really makes no difference whether we use instrumental music or not is the belief that man can decide for himself what to do religiously.
  - 1. If we could decide what to do religiously, there might be many things I'd change.
    - a. If someone were on his deathbed, I might say, "Let's just pray for Jesus to come into your heart. That's going to be much easier."
    - b. If I were really tired & not feeling well on a Sunday, I might hand Tammy my notes and say, "Why don't you preach this morning?"
  - 2. But, if God is sovereign, it is not up to me—or anyone else, for that matter—to decide what we'll do religiously.
- B. In fact, God is sovereign.
  - 1. God has great sovereignty in this world.
    - a. "You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will" (Dan 4:25).
    - b. "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns" (Rev 19:6).
  - 2. Some might be tempted to say, "Wait just a minute! Those passages speak of God's sovereignty over the nations

Answering Arguments Against *A Cappella*  
Does It Really Matter?

of the world. You cannot take those texts & apply them to God's sovereignty over man."

- a. It's very true that these texts speak of God's sovereignty over the nations—Dan 4 speaks of God's sovereignty over the Babylonian Empire & Rev 19 speaks of God's sovereignty over the Roman Empire.
  - b. However, if God has that much sovereignty over the nations of the world with their armies & weapons, think about the power he has over the rest of mankind.
  - c. In fact, we know that God has such sovereignty.
    - 1) "The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting" (Ps 93:1-2).
    - 2) "The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he!" (Ps 99:1-3).
3. God also has sovereignty over the church.
- a. God "put all things under [Jesus'] feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:22-23). How could God give Jesus "as head over all things to the church" unless God is sovereign over the church?
  - b. The church is often referenced as "the kingdom of God" in Scripture. How can the church be "the kingdom of God" unless God is sovereign over the church, his kingdom?
- C. What does it mean that God reigns?
1. It means, quite simply, that God is in control & God has a right to tell me what to do.
    - a. We like the idea of God's sovereignty when we're struggling—We might say that God is in control & all will turn out well.
    - b. Of course, that's the truth, but when I need God to be in control, it's easy to recognize it. Yet, when I want control—when I want to do what I like—it's much more difficult to see God as the One in control.
  2. God has used his sovereignty to instruct his people on worship.
    - a. "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23-24).
    - b. God, in his sovereignty, doesn't want people to worship him just any way, but he seeks those who will worship in "in spirit and truth"?
    - c. Let's recognize the sovereignty of God as we worship!

## GOD'S STANDARDS

- A. Declaring that it makes no difference whether or not we use the instrument not only denies God's sovereignty, but such a belief also declares that God hasn't given standards for worship.
- B. Man needs standards for worship in order to know how to honor God appropriately.
  1. "I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O LORD, but in justice; not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing" (Jer 10:23-24). Notice that Jeremiah even asks God to correct him; if God has no standards, how could Jeremiah be corrected?
  2. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Prov 14:12).
- C. Some might object by saying that God indeed has standards for the way we live, but he hasn't spoken on instrumental music in the New Testament—therefore, it doesn't matter whether or not we use the instrument.
  1. God has indeed placed instrumental music under his sovereignty & he has spelled out instructions for the use of instrumental music in worship.
    - a. "The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Make two silver trumpets. Of hammered work you shall make them, and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for breaking camp . . . On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I am the LORD your God'" (Num 10:1-2, 10). Notice that God regulated instrumental music in the tabernacle.
      - 1) Moses was to make **two** silver trumpets. What if Moses had only made one? What if he had made three?
      - 2) What if Moses had made two **golden** trumpets?

Answering Arguments Against *A Cappella*  
Does It Really Matter?

- 3) What if he had shaped them over a fire & not used a hammer?
- 4) God specified that Moses was to make two silver trumpets of hammered work. In fact, no other instrument was at any time authorized for worship in the tabernacle.
- b. Hezekiah “stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king’s seer and of Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the LORD through his prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel” (2 Chr 29:25-27).
  - 1) In the temple, God commanded the use of cymbals, harps, & lyres, in addition to the use of the trumpets; the use of these instruments was not optional, but it was commanded.
  - 2) No other instruments were ever authorized for use in temple worship.
    - a) Other instruments were occasionally used in the worship of God—“Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!” (Ps 150:3-5). The lute & tambourine weren’t authorized for public worship.
    - b) The Israelites were aware of these instruments, but God ***never*** authorized their use in the temple.
2. What do the commands God gave the Israelites have to do with us today?
  - a. God was ***always*** specific in what instrument was to be used where. He never left such to man’s imagination.
  - b. If God wanted instrumental music in modern worship, does it not stand to reason that he would have told us specifically what instrument to use? He has did before!
    - 1) That seems even more likely when you realize that instruments were known in the early church.
      - a) “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor 13:1).
      - b) “If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?” (1 Cor 14:7).
    - 2) God’s standards do not include instrumental music; therefore, we dare not add it.

## GOD’S SEVERITY

- A. God has a long history of executing severe punishment upon those who worship him inappropriately.
  1. The people of Israel had Aaron construct a golden calf while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Law (Ex 32).
    - a. As a result of the people’s sin, Moses instructed the sons of Levi to go throughout the camp and to kill their fellow Israelites.
      - 1) “The sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell” (Ex 32:28).
      - 2) Yet, it seems that more than those three thousand men fell, for we after that slaughter God says to Moses, “Lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them” (Ex 23:34). Moses then records, “Then the LORD sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made” (Ex 32:35).
    - b. The New Testament also uses this episode as an example of false worship of God: “These things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play’ [Ex 32:6]” (1 Cor 10:6-7).
  2. In the Revelation, we read, “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.’ So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image” (Rev 16:1-2).
  3. Someone might object to those two examples by saying, “Justin, those examples both deal with idolatry, not the worship of the true God.”
    - a. The golden calf was an example of the false worship of the true God.
      - 1) Notice what Aaron said after he constructed the calf: “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” (Ex 32:5).
      - 2) The people were not worshiping a pagan deity, but they were worshiping Yahweh in a way he did not

Answering Arguments Against *A Cappella*  
Does It Really Matter?

desire.

- b. Even when there is pagan idolatry involved, the point is that God has said, “Here’s how you worship,” the people disregarded what God said, & God, therefore, punished.
- B. Does God continue to punish those who worship inappropriately?
1. You betcha!
  2. Notice what the author of Hebrews says, “Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe” (Heb 12:28). The term for “acceptable” means to be well-pleasing to one. In other words, this worship is well-pleasing to God.
    - a. **Why should we offer to God acceptable worship?**
    - b. “For [because] our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29).
  3. Because “our God is a consuming fire,” we need to come before him & worship acceptably.
    - a. We also need to live acceptably?
    - b. Are you living acceptably before God this night?