

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."



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Musical Instruments Allowed by Scripture

--Article Compiled by Terry Carter and George L. Faull



Both the meaning of the Greek words and the history of worship in the synagogues support the use of musical instruments

in worship. Consider the following:

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms (ψαλμός) and hymns (ὕμνος) and spiritual songs (ὠδή), singing (ἀδῶ) and making melody (ψάλλω) in your heart to the Lord" **Ephesians 5:19 (KJV)**

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament

ὕμνος, -ουό in Grk. writ. fr. Hom. down a song of praise of gods, heroes, conquerors, [cf. Trench as below, p. 297], but in the scriptures of God; a sacred song, hymn; plur. Eph. v.19; Col. iii,16...[Syn. ὕμνος, ψαλμός, ὠδή: ὠδή is the generic term; ψαλμῶς and ὕμνος are specific, the former designating a song which took its general character from the O.T. Psalms (although not restricted to them, see I Cor. 14:15, 26), the latter is a song of praise. "While the leading idea ψαλμῶς is a musical accompaniment, and that of ὕμνος praise to God, ὠδή is the general word for a song, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, whether of praise or on any other subject. Thus it was quite possible for the same song to be at once ψαλμῶς, ὕμνος, and ὠδή" (Bp. Lightfoot on Col. 3:16). The words occur together in Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19. See Trench Syn. LXXVIII

Synonyms of the New Testament –Trench LXXVIII

Ψαλμός, from ψάω, properly a touching, and then a touching of the harp of other stringed instruments with the finger or plectrum (ψαλμοὶ τόξων, Euripides, Ion, 174; cf. Bach. 740, are the twanging of the bowstrings), was next the instrument itself, and last of all the song sung with this musical accompaniment. It is in this last stage of its meaning that we find the word adopted in the Septuagint; and to this agree the ecclesiastical definitions of it;

Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament

Psalm

PSALMOS (ψαλμός) primarily denoted a striking or twitching with the fingers (on musical strings); then, a sacred song, sung to musical accompaniment, a psalm...**Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16**

Melody - (Verb)

PSALLO (ψάλλω) primarily to twitch, twang, then, to play a stringed instrument with the fingers, and thence, in the Sept., to sing with a harp, sing psalms, denotes in the N.T., to sing a hymn, sing praise; in **Ephesians 5:19**, "making melody"

Hymn - (Noun)

HUMNOS (ῥυμνος) denotes a song of praise addressed to God (Eng. Hymn), Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16...**Note: the psalmos denoted that which had a musical accompaniment; the ode (Eng. Ode) was the generic term for a song; hence the accompanying adjective "spiritual."**

Liddell and Scott Greek-English Lexicon

ψαλ-μός, ὁ, twitching or twanging with the fingers, ψαλμοὶ τόξων E. Ion 173 (Iyr.); τοξήρει ψαλμῶ [τοξεύσας] Id. HF1064 (Iyr.).

1. mostly of musical strings, πηκτιδων ψαλμοῖς κρέκον ὕμνον Telest.5, cf. Diog. Trag. 1.9, Aret. CA1.1.

2. the sound of the cithara or harp, Pi. Fr.125, cf. Phryn. Trag.11; ψαλμός δ' ἀλαλάζει A. Fr.57.7 (anap.); there were contests in τὸ ψάλλειν, Michel 898.10 (Chios, ii B. C.), 913.6 (Teos, ii B. C.).

3. later, song sung to the harp, psalm, LXX 2 Ki.23.1, al., Ep. Eph.5.19; βίβλος ψαλμῶν Ev. Luc.20.42.

It is plain that the meaning of *psalmos* and *psallo* included musical accompaniment in the Septuagint. That was the Bible that Jesus and the apostles used. It is what the New Testament authors quoted frequently when referring to Old Testament passages.

What the word meant in the Septuagint, is what the word meant when the New Testament was written. Thus, we are commanded to sing with musical accompaniment.

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Edited by Isaac Landman Vol. VIII.

"With the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and the subsequent misfortunes that befell the Jews, the use of the musical instruments in worship almost completely disappeared.

The playing of the organ was forbidden in the synagogue **as a sign of mourning.** No Talmudic rabbi is mentioned as a musician, but musical instruments were still in use; the tractate Kelim makes mention of metal double flutes, pipes, and horns (11:5-6) harps and drums (15:6) and the like."

When the Israelites were taken captive to Babylon, they refused to sing because they were mourning for their nation.

"1 By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion. **2 We hung our harps Upon the willows** in the midst of it. **3** For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us [requested] mirth, [Saying], "Sing us [one] of the songs of Zion!" **4 How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" Psalms 137:1-4**

A similar thing happened after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. As a sign of mourning for their nation, they stopped using instruments in the synagogue. However, when Paul wrote **Ephesians** and **Colossians** between 61 and 63 A.D., instruments were being used in the synagogues. It is simply not accurate to say that the apostolic church did not use musical instruments in their worship.