

"ALWAYS BEING PREPARED..."¹

To explain our beliefs about music in worship, *Ephesians 5:19*

Certain beliefs and practices define us as a religious group in our thinking and other religious groups' thinking. Because we have a responsibility to be "prepared to make a defense" for the things we believe (*1 Peter 3:15*), we need to have a conversational understanding of our beliefs and practices that we can share with others. This lesson continues a series looking at some of the more apparent beliefs and practices that tend to define us, things like baptism, communion, and music in worship, and will offer a biblical explanation for them. In particular, this lesson explores our beliefs about music in worship:

We believe the changes in worship that accompany the transition from the Law of Moses to the Law of Christ include moving from Levitical musicians to congregational vocal music.

Music in worship

- God commanded the use of musical instruments during worship in the Old Testament (*2 Chronicles 29:25*), but we claim that God no longer authorizes musical instruments in worship.
- Understanding our claim begins by recognizing God's purposes for the Law of Moses.
 - God designed the Law of Moses to prepare people for Jesus (*Galatians 3:15-24*).
 - Jesus' arrival brought the Law of Moses to its conclusion and allowed for the inauguration of a new covenant (*Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44-47; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13; 7:11-12*).
 - Jesus, for example, told the woman in Sychar that the Mosaic covenant's requirement to worship God in the temple would be removed (*John 4:19-23*).
 - He also announced to his disciples that he was inaugurating a new covenant through his blood (*Matthew 26:26-28*).
 - Jesus' new covenant introduced a new law that Paul described as the "law of Christ" (*1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2*).
- The change between the Law of Moses and Jesus' new law included changes in how God commands people to worship Him.
 - Those changes, for example, include:
 - Changes in giving – under the Old Law, God required a certain percentage in giving (*Leviticus 27:30-33*), while the New Law does not have a predetermined amount (*2 Corinthians 9:6-9*).

¹ 1 Peter 3:15. All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



- Changes in God's temple – under the Old Law, God's presence dwelt in both the tabernacle and temple (*Exodus 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11*), while Jesus' New Law involves Christians serving as God's dwelling place (*Acts 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 19-20*).
- Changes in sacrifices – under the Old Law, God required numerous, regular sacrifices and offerings (*cf. Leviticus 1-7*) while the New Law requires the living sacrifice of individual Christian lives (*1 Peter 2:4-5; Romans 12:1*).
- Those changes reveal two important things:
 - A shift from an outward to an inward focus takes place between the two covenants.
 - An inward shift takes place because God assumes a level of maturity on the part of those under Jesus' new law that He did not expect from people who lived before the introduction of Jesus' law (*Galatians 3:15-4:7*).
- The changes in worship and the shift to a more inward emphasis that accompanies Jesus' law explain our claim that God now has different music expectations.
 - God still expects music in worship. However, the instrument one plays has changed – rather than a select group of Levites playing mechanical instruments (*cf. 2 Chronicles 29:25*), God expects all worshipers to 'make melody with their hearts' (*Ephesians 5:19*).
 - The inward shift to the instrument of the heart follows the larger movement of Jesus' new law while maintaining continuity with God's Old Testament expectation of music in worship.
 - Thus, when we look through the New Testament, we find:
 - It only mentions vocal music (*Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13; Hebrews 2:12; 13:15*).
 - It describes instruments as lifeless (*1 Corinthians 13:1*) while picturing vocal music as living (*Hebrews 13:15*).

Applications

- Even though Paul describes musical instruments as lifeless things, vocal music originating from hearts not focused on Jesus proves equally lifeless (*cf. Colossians 3:1, 15-17*).
- The expectation of a proper focus in worship extends outward to all of one's life; proper worship must pair with proper living (*Matthew 23:23; Isaiah 1:10-17*).
- A tendency sometimes exists among the churches of Christ to overstate the importance of vocal music in worship; while we must not dismiss its importance, it is not a "weightier matter" (*cf. Matthew 23:23*).
- Rather than concerning ourselves with how others worship, we should focus on developing our love for God and allowing it to infuse our worship with the beauty of impassioned hearts.

