

Singing with or without stringed instrumental accompaniment:
An application of the regulative principle to church worship

Introduction

We set the stage for this study by reflection on the fact that what we have as the majority view on instrumental accompaniment is a tradition that was put in place by accommodation to non-reformed and cultural trends and not by wrestling with the application of the regulative principle: sessions, boards, and committees did not discuss and debate the application of sola scriptura and the second commandment to the question of instrumental accompaniment. There has been simply a gradual and uncritical acceptance of instrumental accompaniment and the principle that “what is not forbidden is permitted” (the Lutheran view).

Here is a rough and ready perspective on church history regarding instrumental accompaniment. It is reasonable to conclude that in the years before and during the time of Christ and the apostles there was no use of instruments in the synagogue. The synagogue paved the way for NT churches in contrast to the temple. There was no unchallenged use of instruments in worship in Christian churches for twelve centuries until Rome introduced it (instrumental accompaniment appears in the 8th century but with challenge). From Calvin forward almost all the reformers opposed the use of instrumental accompaniment in worship (except Luther) as did the Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians, though it spread from Luther throughout Protestantism. It appears to be historically true that American churches of the Reformation adopted instrumental accompaniment gradually due to the influence of the revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries more by concession to the growing practice and less by considerations of Scriptural warrant. Accordingly, it is a fact that most Christians today experience instrumental accompaniment as part of worship by an inheritance of tradition.

Church history is not an infallible guide to the truth, but it does make us look for NT (in bond with the OT) guidance. When we look to the NT, the record of church history highlights the fact that *direct* reference to instrumental accompaniment for church worship is absent from the NT. References to instruments of music in any way is sparse limited to things like citation for illustration purposes (1 Corinthians 14:7-9 ⁷ If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? ⁸ And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? ⁹ So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air; 1 Cor. 13. 1, If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal; Mat. 6.2, Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others), eschatological trumpet sounding (Mat. 24.31; 1 Cor. 15.2; 1 Thess. 4.16; Rev. 1.10), and singing with harps in heavenly visions (Rev. 5.8-9: And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation).

But there is a door opener to stringed accompaniment: Paul's command to sing psalms in Col. 3.16 and especially in Eph. 5.19b. In the latter passage, the word translated “make melody” (to psalm) has the idea of plucking on a stringed instrument with or without singing in the history of its usage. It originally meant to pluck on a string, then it took on the use of plucking on strings with singing, and then it took on the use of simply to sing with no stringed accompaniment. What do we learn from Eph. 5.19b (to make melody or to psalm)? We learn that stringed accompaniment *may* be included in the regulation for worship that Paul gives. We also learn that to be more specific, we must go back to the OT use of the word “to psalm” that Paul uses. And this directs us mainly to the book of Psalms to see if we can find biblical support there for God's regulation of new temple worship.

From the Psalms (mainly), we find two uses of the word “to psalm” (make melody in Eph.5.19b): a common and uncontested use, to sing praise (or just to praise) without stringed accompaniment, and a more complicated use, to sing praise with stringed accompaniment. We

will cover each with examples that will pave the way for some concluding remarks (these lists are not exhaustive).

1A. Common uncontested use

The idea of singing, especially singing praise, is the common, core, and uncontested meaning of “to psalm” (make melody, Eph. 5.19b) and thus of singing psalms or simply singing praises. Many Psalms use “to sing praises” to translate “to psalm.” Some examples are:

- 1) **Psalm 30:4** Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.
 - 2) **Psalm 57:9** I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.
 - 3) **Psalm 66:2** sing (psalm) the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!
 - 4) **Psalm 68:4** Sing to God, sing praises (psalm or psalm-sing) to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before him!
 - 5) **Psalm 68:32** O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises (psalm) to the Lord
- Like many above, this text has psalming parallel with singing.
- 6) **Psalm 92:1** It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises (to psalm) to your name, O Most High
 - 7) **Psalm 105:2** Sing to him, sing praises (psalm-sing) to him; tell of all his wondrous works!

Note that to psalm is parallel with both to sing and “tell of his wondrous works,” so, the psalming here is singing without playing an instrument. “To psalm” can mean to sing praise without instrumental accompaniment as a way of making declaration or confession.

8) **Ps. 22 (Psalm 22:12 - 23:1,**¹² Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; ¹³ they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; ¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet- ¹⁷ I can count all my bones- they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. ¹⁹ But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! ²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen! ²² I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴ For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him. ²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. ²⁶ The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever! ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. ²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. ²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. ³⁰ Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; ³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.)

The text reaches to the cross and into the national universalism of the gospel: praise singing will occur among all families of all nations.

9) **Ps. 69 (Psalm 69:1 - 70:1** Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. ² I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. ³ I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. ⁴ More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore? ⁵ O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you. ⁶ Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. ⁷ For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. ⁸ I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. ⁹ For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. ¹⁰ When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. ¹¹ When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. ¹² I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me. ¹³ But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness. ¹⁴ Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. ¹⁵ Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me. ¹⁶ Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. ¹⁷ Hide not your face from your servant; for I am in distress; make haste to answer me. ¹⁸ Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies! ¹⁹ You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. ²⁰ Reproaches have broken my

heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. ²¹ They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. ²² Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. ²³ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. ²⁴ Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them. ²⁵ May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents. ²⁶ For they persecute him whom you have struck down, and they recount the pain of those you have wounded. ²⁷ Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you. ²⁸ Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous. ²⁹ But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high! ³⁰ I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. ³¹ This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. ³² When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. ³³ For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners. ³⁴ Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. ³⁵ For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it; ³⁶ the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it)

In the time of anticipation, there is imprecation. Praise in song will surface among the nations after the crucifixion, but without imprecation. There are elements of the shift from the old to the new wineskin (from promise to fulfillment).

2A. A more complicated use

Recognizing the fact of a huge change from old temple worship to new temple worship, we must give full significance to the principle of discontinuity. For example, there is no literal temple and singing is for all believers not just the priests who were also musicians. A new wineskin replaces the old one but a wineskin or law-structure still remains and with it will be some kind of fulfillment continuity. *So, we must search for continuity within the three types of Psalms in which "to psalm" occurs with instrumental accompaniment.* Rough and ready, the three types are celebratory texts, metaphorical texts, and anticipatory texts. However, we may think of all the Psalms as anticipatory, so this last classification needs honing, but it serves the purpose of identifying the Psalms that have direct bearing on the use of stringed instruments in new temple worship. Perhaps, it would be better to subsume the first two categories under the heading of Psalms irrelevant to new covenant worship and the last category under the heading of Psalms relevant to new covenant worship.

1B. Psalms irrelevant to new covenant worship in a literal way

Celebration may occur at special feasts and kingly inaugurals. Nehemiah mentions the use of instruments to celebrate the dedication of the newly rebuilt wall of Jerusalem (**And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, Neh. 12.27**). Isaiah mentions the use of instruments at ungodly feasts: (¹¹ **Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them!** ¹² **They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands, Isa. 5.11-12**). Job speaks of fallen man rejoicing with instrumental music (¹² **They sing to the tambourine and the lyre and rejoice to the sound of the pipe.** ¹³ **They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol.** ¹⁴ **They say to God, 'Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways, 21.12-14**). In Daniel 3.5-15, a fanfare of musical instruments introduced the call to bow in overt idol worship.

In the Psalms, we have celebration texts as well; these overlap with Psalms characterized by metaphorical exaggeration. As we review the following Psalms, we should point out the fact that there is relevance to the NT, but it is not in a literal way.

1) Ps. 68.24-26

(Psalm 68:1, **God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him!** ² **As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God!** ³ **But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!** ⁴ **Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before him!** ⁵ **Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.** ⁶ **God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.** ⁷ **O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, Selah** ⁸ **the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel.** ⁹ **Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored**

your inheritance as it languished; ¹⁰ your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy. ¹¹ The Lord gives the word; the women who announce the news are a great host: ¹² "The kings of the armies—they flee, they flee!" The women at home divide the spoil—¹³ though you men lie among the sheepfolds—the wings of a dove covered with silver, its pinions with shimmering gold. ¹⁴ When the Almighty scatters kings there, let snow fall on Zalmon. ¹⁵ O mountain of God, mountain of Bashan; O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan! ¹⁶ Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain, at the mount that God desired for his abode, yes, where the LORD will dwell forever? ¹⁷ The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them; Sinai is now in the sanctuary. ¹⁸ You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there. ¹⁹ Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. Selah ²⁰ Our God is a God of salvation, and to GOD, the Lord, belong deliverances from death. ²¹ But God will strike the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways. ²² The Lord said, "I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea, ²³ that you may strike your feet in their blood, that the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from the foe." ²⁴ Your procession is seen, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary— ²⁵ the singers in front, the musicians last, between them virgins playing tambourines: ²⁶ "Bless God in the great congregation, the LORD, O you who are of Israel's fountain!" ²⁷ There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead, the princes of Judah in their throng, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali. ²⁸ Summon your power, O God, the power, O God, by which you have worked for us. ²⁹ Because of your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bear gifts to you. ³⁰ Rebuke the beasts that dwell among the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples. Trample underfoot those who lust after tribute; scatter the peoples who delight in war. ³¹ Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God. ³² O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, Selah ³³ to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice. ³⁴ Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the skies. ³⁵ Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel— he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!)

This is celebration with dancing and tambourines in the heavenly sanctuary (Mount Sinai is now in the sanctuary, v. 17) with musicians. The language builds on old temple worship (the temple at Jerusalem, v. 29).

This is perhaps both celebration and exaggerated metaphor that lifts the hearts of those in old temple worship to the true temple and king; it does that for us today as well. We can speak of all the musicians of the earth in parade into the heavenly sanctuary with celebration and fanfare to glorify God—not merely with millions dancing to His honor as king, but universally by all in heaven and earth, angel and man exalting His name along with trees, mountains, valleys, and all the creatures dwelling within them.

2) Ps. 81.1-7

(Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! ² Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. ³ Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. ⁴ For it is a statute for Israel, a rule of the God of Jacob. ⁵ He made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over the land of Egypt. I hear a language I had not known: ⁶ "I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket. ⁷ In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah)

This is clearly festive song and dance announced by trumpets; it is celebration of the Passover deliverance from Egyptian bond service. It refers back to the singing and dancing of Miriam recorded in Exodus 15.19-23 (the dancing that eventually turned to complaining at Meribah). Although the Lord's Table is called a feast, it is not an occasion for feasting and celebrating in this way. There is no literal feast of celebration any longer because Christ is our Passover and His body and blood in symbols of bread and wine make up the new covenant Passover meal.

3) Ps. 98.1-8

(Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. ² The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. ³ He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. ⁴ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! ⁵ Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! ⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD! ⁷ Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together ⁹ before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.)

The call to sing songs and praises to the Lord is conjoined with the call to sing with the lyre, with trumpets, with rivers clapping their hands; with hills singing because of the Lord's coming to bring salvation to all the ends of the earth and to judge the world with righteousness. This is prophetic/poetic metaphor that looks forward to the now and not yet of the kingdom that has come in Christ.

These things do not give us literal direction regarding the use of instruments in new temple worship. Instead, the entire picture is poetic exaggeration that expresses the awesome nature of God's salvation and steadfast love and the duty of all to give Him glory and praise in a way that is similar to what will take place on the Day of Judgment and universal glory.

4) Ps. 149.1-9

(Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! ² Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! ³ Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! ⁴ For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation. ⁵ Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. ⁶ Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, ⁷ to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, ⁸ to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, ⁹ to execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the LORD!)

This text speaks of praise in the assembly with dancing, tambourine, and lyre. These are expressions of praise, song, and joy that God commands the godly (both in the assembly and on their beds). Matching the praises in their throats are swords in their hands. The prophetic perspective is on the coming execution of vengeance that they are to exact on the nations!

Words such as these formed the outlook of John the Baptist who thought that the coming of Messiah entailed the immediate execution of judgment on the nations (the Messiah will baptize with the Spirit and with the fire of final vengeance, Mat. 3.11-12). This is an assembly for the Day of Judgment; this kind of praise does not characterize the worship of the church in the time between. Therefore, it seems best to conclude that the musical nature of this praise symbolizes the joy, thankfulness, and praise of the people of God when Jesus finally subdues all of His and their enemies. The text does not give us direction as to literal worship in either the old or new covenant. However, the joy, thankfulness, and praise surely pertain to both the now as well as to the not yet of the coming kingdom.

5) Ps. 150.1-6

(Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! ² Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! ³ Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! ⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! ⁵ Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! ⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!)

This text is surely an example of poetic metaphor. The sanctuary in which the worship takes place is in his mighty heavens. There are expanding references to praise with instruments of a great variety. Surely, the praise involves song with instrumental accompaniment and dancing accompanies the singing. We have song and dance! Moreover, we have a choir that is of such universal scope that it includes all humans and all animals that breathe the Creator's fresh air. It is easy to conclude that this text does not give us literal direction for worship by which to understand Paul injunction (Eph. 5.19b) to make melody or psalm-sing in new temple worship. However, with Calvin we can affirm that "The Psalmist therefore, in exhorting believers to pour fourth all their joy in the praises of God, enumerates, one upon another, all the musical instruments which were then in use, and reminds them that they ought all to be consecrated to the worship of God...only let the reader remember that sundry different kinds (of musical instruments) are here mentioned, which were in use under the legal economy, the more forcibly to teach the children of God that they cannot apply themselves too diligently to the praise of God-as if he would enjoin them strenuously to bring to this service all their powers, and devote themselves wholly to it."

2B. Psalms relevant to new covenant worship in a literal way

There are many Psalms that are not characterized by metaphorical/celebratory exuberance. These texts present us with a picture of new covenant worship that includes singing with stringed accompaniment. Two particular things point to the relevance of these texts for NT worship: 1) the similarity of language in the use of “to Psalm” between these Psalms and Paul’s injunction in Ephesians 5.19b, and 2) the anticipation within these texts of the time of gospel universalism.

1) Ps. 33.1-4

(Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. ² Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! ³ Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts. ⁴ For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness)

To make melody in Psalm 33.2 (to psalm to him, ψάλλατε αὐτῷ) is *the practical equivalent of Paul’s word in Ephesians 5.19b* (psalming...to the Lord, ψάλλοντες...τῷ κυρίῳ). The Hebrew underlying Psalm 33.2 is “make music to him” (thus, to psalm can mean make music on a stringed instrument). In the wholeness of the Psalm, the text commands skillful playing along with praise and song. Verse 3 makes it clear that this praise with stringed accompaniment is performed by singing that is exuberant, exalting, and loud: it is aloud-joy. This means that the singing is to be hearty. It cannot be half-hearted; it is to be forceful like that of shouting, like the effort put forth to shout. This challenges us about how loud our singing should be: it is to be aloud and exuberantly so. Surely, it is appropriate to tell myself: “awake my soul and sing of Him who died for thee...”

2) Ps. 43.1-5

(Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me! ² For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? ³ Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God)

There is strong allusion here to the coming of Christ as light and truth. Deceitful and unjust men opposed Him and God apparently rejected Him. He therefore goes to the altar, but not without hope for once the sacrifice on the altar occurs, then Christ will again praise God in resurrection deliverance. His praising is with the lyre. How does Jesus sing and praise with the lyre *among the Gentiles* as we are told He does in Romans 15.9 (reaching back to Ps. 57.8-9, Paul says, ⁸ For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” ¹⁰ And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” ¹¹ And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.” ¹² And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope,” Rom.15.8-12)? He does so in union with His church family now composed of Jews and Gentiles. He will sing and praise with the lyre in the singing and praising with the lyre of His covenant family.

3) Ps. 57.8-9

[⁸ Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! ⁹ I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises [this is literally make melody as in Eph. 5.19b; thus, to sing praise, v. 9, may include harp and lyre, v. 8] to you among the nations. Paul applies this text to the NT church in Romans 15.9. The nations remind us of the great commission and the gospel that goes to all nations. As Jews and Gentiles wake up to glorify God, they are to do so by waking up stringed instruments to accompany their singing.

The making of music (both LXX and Hebrew for Ps. 57.9b) is translated praising in song per the context of giving thanks and confessing God to the nations (cf. Rom. 15.9). The combination of things from Paul in Romans and Ephesians yields the conclusion that singing in new temple worship appropriately includes making music in song with stringed accompaniment. A number of Psalms direct us in a similar way.

4) Ps. 71.22

I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre; thus the praise (our word in Ephesians 5.19b) is in song because it is with stringed accompaniment. Again, the Hebrew is “make music to you with the lyre” and is translated in the LXX: “I will psalm (praise) you with the lyre/harp” or sing praise to you with the harp. The praising is by *song* with musical accompaniment.

5) Ps. 92.1-4

(It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; ² to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, ³ to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. ⁴ For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy)

All the instruments are stringed. The text interlaces stringed accompaniment, singing praises, declaration/confession and meditation (there is meditative playing for meditative praising in song).

6) Ps. 108.1-3

(My heart is steadfast, O God! I will sing and make melody [to psalm as Eph. 5.19b] with all my being! ² Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! ³ I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. ⁴ For your steadfast love is great above the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. ⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!)

Harp and lyre are to wake up the dawn (begin singing from the crack of dawn) and in this way I will sing praises to you among the nations. Again, this extends to NT gospel among the nations where there may be singing on stringed instruments (Cf. again, Rom. 15.8-12 with Ps. 43 and 57 above).

7) Ps. 144.9-10

(⁹ I will sing a new song to you, O God; upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to you ¹⁰ who gives victory to kings, who rescues David his servant from the cruel sword)

The ultimate David will sing a new song in the time of the new wine and He will do so on a ten-stringed harp. Thus, the Lord sings in the midst of the congregation (Heb. 2.12 based on Ps. 22.22). How can He do this unless it is by means of His presence in the assembly when His brothers and sisters sing with stringed accompaniment?

8) Ps. 147.7

(⁷ Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody [Eph. 5.19b] to our God on the lyre!)

To psalm means to make melody to God on a stringed instrument, but it has the flavor of singing (it is bonded to singing) and it is the singing of thanksgiving praise.

Conclusions

A. We do not get new temple worship directives from the metaphorical texts in the Psalms because these texts do not present the various actions (dancing, clapping of people, trees, and mountains) and instruments in repetitive and exaggerated formats (listing all to make the point of hearty and exuberant joy in worship) for imitation or implementation in literal worship (for then or now). Celebrations of kingly enthronement may apply to presidential inaugurations, but the actions and instrumentality do not apply to church worship.

B. The literal texts do apply in more than one way. 1) Some literal singing texts include the use of instrumental accompaniment and some do not. 2) The singing with or without instrumental accompaniment is oriented to worship with God's approval. 3) The singing with or without instrumental accompaniment relates to new covenant worship in that the Israelite Psalmist points ahead to *the* Israelite (*the* seed of Abraham), the Israelite king David anticipates the coming of the Son of David who sings with His people in new covenant worship with or without instrumental accompaniment. How does our Lord do these things? It is by His presence in the gatherings of the NT church; He sings with us in our singing with or without instrumental accompaniment.

C. Implications

1) Instrumental accompaniment with congregational singing is a sub-point of a sub-point.

Singing is subordinate to the preaching and teaching of the word of Christ (Eph. 5.19f). Thus, instrumental accompaniment occupies an even more subordinate place (thrice removed from the preached word: the word, singing, and then instrumental accompaniment).

2) This fact sets forth a trajectory that moves in the direction of less instrumental accompaniment as the church goes forward. Instrumental accompaniment of orchestras, bands, and solos flow upstream to biblical teaching; they go against the grain and not with it. The historical redemptive movement from old temple worship to new temple worship has substantial discontinuity. There is no literal temple in a single place on earth in Jerusalem: we are the building and the Lord is with us when we gather two or three or more. Singing is no longer restricted to the Levite priests: now all believers are priests and all are the Lord's singers with whom He sings. Notably, the shift in instrumental accompaniment is at the least a shift toward simplicity and universality: if all believers are priests who sing, all are not priests who play a great variety of instruments. It is self-evident that the regulation to priests to sing does not give regulation for instrumental accompaniment. The impression then is in the direction of no instrumental accompaniment whatever. We have the command that all believers sing but no command that all believers play instruments; this goes with new covenant universality and simplicity for all can learn to sing but not all can learn to play an instrument in ways sufficient for orderly worship.

The old temple/new temple shift suggests no instrumental accompaniment; that is the flow of thought, the historical redemptive old to new wineskin, the trajectory, and the direction of the grain. To try to add more and more talent and more and more instrumentality to the NT church goes against the grain in principle. It is retrogressive failing to appreciate the radical movement forward from old temple worship to new temple worship, if we aim at more and more instrumentality in NT worship.

3) Instrumental accompaniment is not necessary for new temple worship.

God's regulation (by good and necessary consequence via Eph/Col and the Psalms) is that the church is to sing with or without instrumental accompaniment. If a church finds itself without skilled instrumentalists among its membership, it should not feel that there is something central lacking in its worship.

4) Instrumental accompaniment may be part of NT church worship but limited to stringed accompaniment because that is the OT backdrop of "make melody" in Paul's regulation in Ephesians 5.19b. This is the case because the texts in Paul point back to the Psalms and the relevant Psalms open the instrumental door only to various stringed instruments.

If we try to extrapolate from the open door to stringed accompaniment that is allowed to every kind of instrument, we move in thought against the historical-redemptive movement to universality and simplicity.

5) Probably the most important bottom line is that preeminence ought to be given to congregational singing. With or without stringed accompaniment, congregational singing is an element of worship by which those welcomed by the Lord into the Christian family **bring praise to God** (Rom. 15.7) and **glorify Him for His mercy** (Rom. 15.9).

Romans 15:7-9 ⁷ Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ⁸ For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."