

Psalms 33:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

Analysis

Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Following call to rejoice and praise (v. 1), David specifies musical instruments to accompany worship. This establishes that all of life's created gifts—including artistic skill and musical instruments—should be consecrated to God's glory, demonstrating worship engages beauty and creativity, not merely words.

Praise the LORD with harp introduces musical accompaniment. Hebrew kinnor (harp/lyre) was ancient Israel's most common stringed instrument, associated with skilled musicianship. David himself was expert harpist (1 Samuel 16:23). Praising with instruments adds beauty, joy, artistic excellence to verbal proclamation. God delights in creativity employed for His glory.

Sing unto him (Hebrew zamar—make music, sing praise) connects vocal and instrumental worship. This verb typically involves both voice and instrument together—integrated musical worship. Combination engages multiple faculties: intellect (understanding words), emotion (feeling musical beauty), body (physical skill), spirit (directing all toward God). True worship is holistic, engaging whole person.

With the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings specifies additional instruments. Hebrew nebel was type of harp or lyre, possibly larger than kinnor. Instrument of ten strings ('asor) indicates ten-stringed lyre, suggesting sophisticated musical

complexity. Specificity demonstrates God cares about excellence and variety in worship—not careless noise but skillful artistry. Multiple instruments create richer, fuller sound, symbolizing diverse ways creation praises Creator.

Reformed theology affirms goodness of creation and culture. Arts, music, human skill are gifts from God to be cultivated for His glory. Worship should engage beauty, not merely function. Regulative principle (worship should follow Scripture's direction) doesn't mean aesthetic minimalism but biblical artistry—using God-given gifts with excellence and joy.

Historical Context

David revolutionized Israel's worship by organizing musicians and establishing formal musical guilds (1 Chronicles 15:16-24, 25:1-31). He appointed skilled musicians to play harps, lyres, cymbals before ark. This wasn't spontaneous enthusiasm but organized, trained, excellent artistic worship. Temple later incorporated this musical tradition extensively.

Psalms' superscriptions frequently include musical notations—indicating instruments, melodies, performance instructions. Psalms were meant to be sung with instrumental accompaniment, not merely recited. This integration of poetry, theology, melody, instrumentation represents high artistic achievement in service of worship.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does using musical instruments in worship reflect God's delight in beauty and creativity?

2. What does call for skilled, excellent musical worship teach about cultivating artistic gifts for God's glory?
3. How can modern worship balance accessibility with excellence, enthusiasm with artistry?
4. In what ways does integrating music with words enhance worship beyond either alone?
5. What other God-given gifts and cultural expressions can be consecrated to worship besides music?

Interlinear Text

וְהוֹדֵה	לַיהוָה	בְּכִנּוֹר	וּבְנֵי כֹל
Praise	the LORD	with harp	unto him with the psaltery
H3034	H3068	H3658	H5035
	וְעַל שָׁרָר	וְזָמְרוּ	לֹא:
	and an instrument of ten strings	sing	H0
	H6218	H2167	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 144:9 (Resurrection): I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

Exodus 15:20 (Parallel theme): And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

Revelation 5:8 (Parallel theme): And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Revelation 14:2 (Parallel theme): And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

Psalms 92:3 (Parallel theme): Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

1 Chronicles 25:6 (References Lord): All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.

1 Chronicles 15:28 (References Lord): Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.

1 Chronicles 15:16 (Sin): And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.

1 Chronicles 25:3 (Resurrection): Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD.

2 Samuel 6:5 (References Lord): And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.