

Let The Bible Speak ..about Instrumental Music

What one does in worship is of supreme importance. Paul declared, "*And what soever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*" *Colossians 3:17*. From this statement we learn that whatever we do must be done by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said in *John 4:23-24* that the true worshipper does so in "spirit and truth." The fact that there are true worshippers implies that there are false worshippers. We must be careful to be a true worshipper. Also in *Matthew 15:8-9*, Jesus emphasized that when one worships according to the doctrines and precepts of men that his worship is "vain." Anyone who has the least bit of regard for his soul will have a genuine interest in this matter. The Christian's worship is of great importance!

The question now is, "What does the New Testament teach concerning music in worship?" One may in just a few moments read all the New Testament has to say in regard to music in the worship of the church. Please take time to read *Matthew 26:30, Acts 16:25, Romans 15:9-11, 1 Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 13:15, James 5:13*. Without exception we are taught to "sing." Therefore, we must conclude concerning the mechanical instrument of music that Christ did not authorize it, no apostle commanded it, and no apostolic church ever used it. The Holy Spirit specified the kind of music we are to use in worship and to add one's own view to the teaching of the Holy Spirit is to add to the word of God (*Proverbs 30:6, Revelation 22:18-19*).

The mechanical instrument of music was added by man without the authority of Christ. The **American Encyclopaedia**, Vol. XII, page 688 says, 'Pope Vitalian is related to have introduced organs into some of the churches of Southern Europe about A.D. 670, but the only trustworthy account is that of one sent as a present by Greek Emperor, Constantine Copronymous, to Pepin, king of the Franks in 775.'

It is often made to appear that those who refuse to use mechanical instruments of music are a peculiar lot and as such are out of step with the best thinkers. Would it surprise you to learn that the greatest of minds have considered the mechanical instrument of music in worship to be sinful? C. H. Spurgeon said, "I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery." Martin Luther declared, "The organ is the ensign of Baal." John Wesley wrote, "I have no objection to the organ in our chapel provided it is neither heard nor seen." Adam Clark observed, "I am an old man and an old minister and I here declare that I have never known instrumental music to be productive of good in the worship of God, and have reason to believe that it has been productive of much evil." For those who follow the New Testament, these quotations are not to be taken as authority for a practice but they do show that some of the very best minds in the religious world have considered the mechanical instrument of music in worship to be sinful.

The most popular argument made for the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is that *Psalms 150* authorizes their use. However, one must be aware that the Psalms are a part of the Old Testament and even more than that, they are considered by Jesus to be a part of the law. In

John 10:34 Jesus said, "Has it not been written in your law?" and then proceeded to quote *Psalms 82:6*. If one can go back to the law of Moses which has been nailed to the cross, for authority today, then he can go there for authority to offer animal sacrifice, burn incense, and many other things. We are not under the Law of Moses, but under the gospel of Jesus Christ (*Romans 1:16-17*).

Another argument used in favor of mechanical instruments of music in worship is one based in *Revelation 14:2*. This passage says, "*And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder. and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.*" The American Standard Version more correctly translated the last part of the verse to say, "...and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps." What John heard was a voice that was as "many waters," "great thunder," and "harpers harping with their harps." John did not hear harpers harping with their harps. Friend, even if such things as literal harps could be found in heaven it would be no argument for such in worship today. There are many things found in heaven that cannot be found in the church.

Some contend that because we have mechanical instruments of music in our homes that we can have them in the church. Let me remind you that the home is not the church, and we have things in our home that we cannot have in the church. I enjoy a meal of cornbread and beans, and a glass of sweet milk at home, but it has no place in the worship of God. I enjoy sleeping at home, but it should find no place in the worship of God.

An objection that is often given is that the mechanical instrument of music is involved in the Greek word 'psallo' which is consistently translated "to sing" or "make melody." However, when one studies the Greek lexicons he soon learns that even though the word at one time was used to mean, "to play on a stringed instrument," that by the New Testament times the word had come to mean "to sing." Please note the following references: Newman, **Concise Greek/English Dictionary of the New Testament**, "Sing, sing a hymn of praise, sing praise." Thayer, "to pluck off, pull out ... absol. to play on a stringed instrument, to play the harp, etc. ... in the New Testament to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song. Jas. v. 13." Moulton and Milligan **Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament**, "properly play on a harp, but in the N.T., as in James 5:13 - sing a hymn." Bauer, "to extol by singing praises, to sing praises." Kittel, **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, "ado, 'to sing' ... 'to sing of' ... There is no distinction from Psallein in *Eph. 5:19*." So, it becomes quite obvious, even to the casual student that even though the word one time carried the idea of playing a stringed instrument, that by the time the New Testament was written, it was used to mean, "to sing." If the mechanical instrument is inferred in the word then there is no way one may please God without it and thus one is inconsistent to contend for its use and then say that one may or may not use the mechanical instrument of music. If it is inferred in the word then we have no choice in the matter, we must use it. That which proves too much, proves nothing. If the mechanical instruments of music are inferred in the word, then one could not even read the Psalms today without musical accompaniment. Such an idea, at very best, is unpalatable and even unscriptural. The truth of the matter is that the New Testament teaches that we are to sing (**Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16**).

My friend, there is really no difficulty at all in learning our duty in this matter from the Bible. We are to sing, and to do otherwise is to add to the word of God and to worship Him without faith (**Romans 10:17, 14:23**).