

Music In Worship

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I. WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT SAY?

- A. Look at every New Testament verse which mention music:
1. **Matthew 26:30** - "And when they had SUNG an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olive."
 2. **Acts 16:25** - "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and SANG praises unto God."
 3. **Romans 15:9** - "As it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and SING unto thy name."
 4. **1 Corinthians 14:15** - "I will SING with the spirit, and I will SING with the understanding also..."
 5. **Ephesians 5:19** - "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, SINGING and making melody in your heart to the Lord."
 6. **Colossians 3:16** - "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, SINGING with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
 7. **Hebrews 2:12** - "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I SING praise unto thee."
 8. **James 5:13** - "Is any among you merry? Let him SING psalms."
(Notice that each reference is to vocal music-singing.)
- B. These Bible verses teach us:
1. Who is to sing? Every Christian, not solos, choruses, etc.
 2. What to sing? Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, not "rock-n-roll", "christian rock", etc.
 3. Why to sing? To worship God ("to the Lord") and to teach and admonish one another.
 4. How to sing? From the heart and with understanding.

II. THE ORIGIN OF MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP.

- A. "We know that instruments performed an important function in the Hebrew temple service and in the ceremonies of the Greeks. At this point, however, a break was made with all previous practice, and although the lyre and flute were sometimes employed by the Greek converts, as a general rule the use of instruments in worship were condemned. Many of the fathers, speaking of religious song, make no mention of instruments; others, like Clement of Alexandria and St. Chrysostom, refer to them only to denounce them."
(E. Dickinson, quoted by M. C. Kurfees, Instrumental Music in the Worship, Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co.; 1950; pp.144-145.)
- B. "Singing formed an essential part of the Christian worship, but it was in unison and without musical accompaniment." *(Lars P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons; 1942; p. 158)*
- C. "The earliest reference is to the use of the flute and the harp in the second century. At Alexandria, Clement forbade the use of the flute, on the ground

that it was "too worldly" and substituted the harp. Ambrose is said to have introduced instrumental music in the West in the fourth century." (*George A. Klingman, Church History for Busy People Cincinnati, Ohio: Christian Leader Corp.; 1909; pp. 92-93*)

- D. "Pope Vitalian is related to have introduced organs into some of the churches in Southern Europe about A. D. 670, but the only trustworthy account is that of one sent as a present by the Greek Emperor, Constantine Copranzmus, to Pepin, king of the Franks in 775."
(*F. A. Decker, Why I Left, Delight, Ark.: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1949; p. 27*)
- E. "In the Greek church the organ never came into use, but after the eighth century it became common in the Latin church, not, however without opposition from the side of the Monks..." (*V. E. Howard, What is the Church of Christ?, Greenville, TX: 1956; p. 178*)
- F. "For years the Baptists fought the introduction of instrumental music into the churches ... Installation of the organ brought serious difficulties in many churches."
(*TATM. B. Posey, The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley*)

III. COMMENTS OF DENOMINATIONAL LEADERS.

- A. "Musical instruments in the celebration of praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of other shadows of the law. ... Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in the noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostles is far more pleasing." (*John Calvin, founder of Presbyterian church*)
- B. "An organ in the worship of God is an ensign of Baal." (*Martin Luther, founder of Lutheran church*)
- C. "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither seen nor heard." (*John Wesley, founder of Methodist church*)
- D. "I'd as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery."
(*Charles Spurgeon, English Baptist minister*)

IV. POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

- A. "The Bible doesn't say not to play instruments..."
1. When God specifies one thing, all other possibilities are excluded.
 2. Consider God's command to Noah, "Build thee an ark of gopher wood" (Genesis 6:14).
 3. Would it be right to add to the Lord's Supper beyond what God has specified?
 - a. The Bible doesn't say not to add milk and chocolate cake to the Lord's Supper.
 - b. Yet, the law of exclusion and common sense would teach us it is wrong!

- B. "They used instruments of music to worship in the Old Testament. "
1. This is true (Psalms 43:4).
 2. The Old Testament is not our source of authority (Galatians 3:24-25; Acts 3:22-26).
- C. "But you listen to instrumental music in your home. "
1. We do many things in the home (eating common meals, playing games, etc.) which are not authorized in the church.
 2. Note: the playing of spiritual songs with musical accompaniment is as wrong in *individual* worship as in *collective* worship.
- D. "The instrument is simply an aid to our singing, like a songbook or a tuning fork."
1. When a songbook, tuning fork, or other aid is used the act remains the same: we sing.
 2. With the instrument the act of worship changes: one is singing and playing.
- E. "But I just like to hear the instrumental music."
1. This is the real honest reason why most denominations have the instrument: to satisfy men's desires.
 2. We seek to please God, not men, and not even ourselves (Galatians 1:10).
- F. "The Greek word for 'sing' originally meant to sing with musical accompaniment."
1. The Greek word is "PSALLO" and is always translated "sing" or "make melody" (Ephesians 5:19; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; James 5:13).
 2. No reliable Greek scholar has ever translated it otherwise. No English version of the Bible has ever incorporated the notion of an instrument in any of these passages.
 3. Notice that this "making melody" is something that is done "in your heart," and not on a piano or organ (Ephesians 5:19).
 4. This command to "PSALLO" in worship to God is a command for all Christians. Thus if the playing of instruments is included in the meaning of the Greek word, then every Christian, not just one or a few, must sing and play an instrument.

Conclusion

1. Although instrumental music is widely accepted in our day and time, it is obvious that it was not used in the first century church and is not authorized by God.
2. It simply comes down to the basic question: Will we precisely obey the word of God's or not?