

IS THERE AUTHORITY FOR MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP? (Ephesians 5:18-19)

I. History of music in worship.

A. There was definitely instrumental music in worship in the Old Testament that was allowed by God.

1. I realize that the voice is an instrument, but I am probably going to say throughout this sermon “instrumental music” as a reference to pianos and instruments such as this.

2. In Old Testament worship, there were horns, psalteries and other instruments used (1 Chronicles 23:5; 2 Chronicles 29:25; Psalm 150:1-6).

3. There is no denying this or even an attempt to do so.

4. God allowed instrumental music in worship to Him at the tabernacle and temple under the Mosaic Law.

B. Things changed when the Israelites went into captivity and began to worship in synagogues.

1. In a book entitled “Church Music in History and Practice”, Winford Douglas wrote, “The synagogue music was an adoption without instruments of the Temple music.

2. McClintock and Strong wrote, “Instruments were never used in ancient synagogue worship.

a. History shows that there were no instruments in any Jewish synagogue until June 14, 1815 in Berlin, Germany.

b. It is interesting to note that the worship service and the organization of the New Testament church were both an adaptation of the Jewish synagogue worship.

(1) The synagogues were overseen by elders.

(2) The worship services consisted of reading from the law, sermons, praying, singing and giving.

C. When one comes to the establishment of the church under the New Testament, singing is the only music we find in Christian worship (Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; Hebrews 13:15; James 5:13).

D. For the next 500 years, there was no instrumental music in worship to God in the church or by those who had apostatized.

1. Justin Martyr wrote, “The use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the church of Christ...but only the use of plain song”.

2. Dr. James W. McKinnon, professor of musicology at Columbia University, wrote, “The Fathers of the early church were virtually unanimous in their hostility toward musical instruments”.

3. He also mentioned that instruments in the church were not used until after the 4th century.

E. Organs were first introduced in worship around 660 AD by Pope Vitalian.

1. Philip Shaff, a religious historian, wrote, “The Latin Church (Catholic Church) introduced it (the organ) pretty generally, but not without the protest of eminent men, so that in the Council of Trent a motion was made, though not carried, to prohibit the organ at least in the mass.”

2. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church continued to use instrumental music.

F.Many of the men involved in the Protestant Reformation refused to bring the instrument out of Catholicism with them.

- 1.McClintock and Strong wrote, “The early reformers, when they came out of Rome removed them (the instruments) as the monuments of idolatry”.
- 2.Martin Luther called the mechanical instrument in worship “an ensign of Baal and a sign of the devil”.
- 3.John Calvin wrote, “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, the restoration of other shadows of the law”.
- 4.John Wesley, a few years later, wrote, “I have no objection to the instruments of music in our chapels, providing they are neither seen nor heard”.
- 5.Many years later, Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest Baptist preachers of all time, wrote, “I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery”.

G.When you come to the Restoration Movement which began in the very early 1800's, you see that the men involved in this movement realized there was no authority in the New Testament for mechanical instruments of music in worship to God.

- 1.Alexander Campbell wrote, “I presume that to all spiritually minded persons such aids would be as a cowbell in a concert”.
- 2.J.W. McGarvey, one of the greatest minds to have been a part of the church of Christ, wrote, “I hold that the use of the instrument is sinful, and I must not be requested to keep my mouth shut in the presence of sin, whether committed by a church or an individual”.
- 3.However, in 1851, the church of Christ in Midway, KY became the first congregation to bring in an instrument.
- 4.This became one of the leading issues of division in the church and was prominent in the cause of the split between the Christian Church and churches of Christ.
- 5.In 1906, the U.S. Census reported a distinction between the church of Christ and the Christian Church.

II.The type of music that is authorized in the New Testament.

A.There is only one type of music that is authorized in the New Testament and that is a cappella or vocal music with no mechanical instrumental accompaniment.

B.This is what is found in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16.

- 1.The nature of the singing is to be reciprocal, or congregational.
- 2.We are singing to one another in order to teach or admonish one another.
- 3.Each individual is to participate and the heart is the only instrument involved.

C.God is very specific about the type of music He wants.

D.It is interesting that most people who use mechanical instruments of music in worship realize that they need some type of authority to do so.

- 1.There are a few who will tell you that they use them simply because they want to, but not many are that transparent and honest.

2. Some go to the Old Testament for their authority to do so.
 - a. They appeal to those verses mentioned earlier where the various instruments were used to praise God.
 - b. The problem with that is that we are no longer under the Old Testament Law, that Law having been abolished by Jesus on the cross (Colossians 2:13-14; Ephesians 2:13-15).
 - c. The Old Law was fulfilled and a New Law was brought in by Jesus (Hebrews 8:6).
 3. Some go to the book of Revelation for authority (Revelation 5:8; 15:2).
 - a. They will say that there are harps in heaven.
 - b. We need to remember that those in heaven do not have physical bodies but spiritual ones.
 - c. There is no way they are holding physical harps.
 - d. Those harps mentioned are figurative as are the other elements in the verses.
 4. Some say that instruments are an aid to singing and since they are aids, they are scriptural to use.
 - a. An aid is something that helps us carry out the commands we've been given by God.
 - b. A car helps us carry out the command to go.
 - c. A pitch pipe helps us carry out the command to sing.
 - d. An instrument takes the effort of the singer(s) to do something in addition to sing, thus it is an addition and not an aid.
- E. We must have authority for all that we do in worship to God (Colossians 3:17) and vocal music is the only music for which we have authorization.

III. Violations that occur when mechanical instruments of music are used.

- A. It violates the law of faith.
 1. Christians are to be those who walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).
 2. The reason for this is that it takes faith to please God (Hebrews 11:6).
 3. The only avenue for obtaining faith is through the taking in of God's word (Romans 10:17).
 4. You can't find authority for the use of instruments of music in worship to God.
 5. We would be acting apart from faith to use instrumental music in worship to God.
- B. It violates God's laws concerning worship.
 1. There is no act of worship that is acceptable to God unless He has authorized it (John 4:24; 17:17).
 2. The New Testament reveals to us four kinds of worship:
 - a. Vain worship (Matthew 15:9).
 - b. Ignorant worship (Acts 17:23).
 - c. Will worship (Colossians 2:23).
 - d. True worship (John 4:24).
 3. Only singing is according to the word of God, which is the truth.
- C. It violates the law of unity.
 1. Jesus, the night before His death, prayed that all that followed Him would be one (John 17:20-21).
 2. Instrumental music is one of the most disunifying topics in the Lord's

church.

3.Division is present in the Lord's church where the instrument is introduced and that is sinful (1 Corinthians 1:10).

D.It violates the law of exclusion.

1.This principle states that when God specifically commanded something, implicitly all other things in that class are excluded.

2.We know the Bible only authorized by direct statement, approved example, or necessary inference.

3.There is no command, example, or implication of the use of instruments being acceptable to God or used in the first century church.

4.Thus, what music God commanded, singing, excludes all other types of music.

E.It violates the law of silence.

1.God has warned us not to go beyond what is written (2 John 9-10).

2.Instrumental music is going beyond God's written word.

3.We must have generic or specific authority for something.

4.Singing is specified in God's word.

5.If God had said, "make music" then we would have the authority to use instrumental accompaniment along with singing or no singing at all.

6.That, however, is not what God commanded

7.One can't say that it is in the realm of opinion because opinion cannot violate clear Bible teaching.

8.The Bible is not silent about singing: it very specifically commands us to sing.

Some of this material is not original.