

Learn Your Bible

Lesson #10

One important realm that God has decreed for us to do in worship to Him, is to sing. Music has always played an important part in the worship to God. As in several of the other areas we have studied thus far, man's handiwork can be seen in this realm of worship to God. God has commanded one thing, and man ~in many cases~ is responding with another.

We should ask ourselves at the outset of this study "Why do we do the things we do (religiously)?" Are our motives of stubbornness and tradition, or are they of scripture? Jesus identified every act of religion as coming either from heaven or from men in Matthew 21:25. (Recall also our study of Matthew 7:13ff).

The point of our discussion in this lesson will be the music God has commanded for us in the New Testament age. As we will study out the subject, we will find that God has decreed that "singing" is to be the music offered to Him. Obviously most of our neighbors use instrumental music in worship to God.



The Apostle Peter speaking through inspiration gave all of us responsibility. That responsibility is to be able to explain and defend the things that we do in the name of God! "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always {being} ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;" (I Peter 3:15)

Can you or I or anyone else find Christians in the NT playing mechanical instruments in their worship of God? As we look around in the religious community, we must ask "Why not?"

Before we go into the passages dealing with music in the New Testament, let's refresh our memories. Recall the principle we learned in the example of Noah. Noah was told to build an ark... of gopher wood. Expediency would leave Noah free to use saws, hammers, nails and so on, but not to use pine (assuming pine isn't gopher wood... no one really knows). Why? God said gopher wood... that excluded everything else. Anything else, after wading through all the excuses, would be a direct violation of a perfectly clear command of God! So it is with singing. Just as God designated the specific wood

of the ark for Noah, so also God designated the specific music of HIS church.

BEFORE GOING ON, READ EPHESIANS 5:18-20 AND COLOSSIANS 3:16

If you read carefully, you've noticed both the kind of music in the New Testament and the designated accompaniment! The example of any church singing with any accompaniment other than the designated accompaniment "melody of the heart" (described as thankfulness in the heart, Colossians 3:16) does not exist. This tells us point blank that to substitute "heartless" musical instruments for the accompaniment of the heart is no different



than if Noah had substituted pine and fiberglass for gopher wood and pitch. After all, wouldn't fiberglass be "better?" It would take a better paint job! What about a substitute of coffee and donuts for unleavened bread and fruit of the vine in the Lord's supper... that would be more modern and perhaps more socially acceptable!

Four arguments are put forward in support of instrumental music. Firstly, they had it in the Old Testament. No one can deny the fact that musical instruments were used in the Old Testament (see II Chronicles 29:25). A proper understanding of the dispensations (which we have previously studied) answers this quibble. Using Paul's argument in Galatians 5:3 (on circumcision) that bringing forward into the New Testament a piece of the Old Testament, makes us a debtor to the whole law (animal sacrifices, etc.) He goes on in verse 4 to say that this will cause you to fall from grace.

A little clearer picture of "why" it wasn't included can be obtained by a little thought on the nature of the Old Law. Everything in the Old Testament was a symbol of something in the New Testament. The animal sacrifices in various ways looked forward to Christ. The physical looked to the spiritual. Incense in the Old Testament is one of those clearly understood symbols. In Revelation 8:3 and 4 we learn what the incense offered under the Old Testament represented... the prayers of the saints.

It is a "safe" conclusion then that the instruments under the Old Law looked forward to the "melody of the heart" of the New. The

physical instruments, it is clear, are contrary to the very nature of the New Testament.

A second attempt to justify the very popular tradition of instrumental music in the worship of the saints is from the Greek word PSALLO. Generally we can assume if the argument is too sophisticated Jesus wouldn't have made it... He spoke to the common people. But here goes...The argument is that the word (translated with only one exception in the New Testament as "to sing") means to sing *with an instrument*.

Our answer to this argument is two-fold. The primary answer is the origin of the word. It originally meant to pluck your hair. With time it came to mean to pluck or strum on a harp. The word progressed to the point that in David and Solomon's time, it meant either to sing (period!) or to strum (pluck). Today it means purely to sing.

That's all well and good you say... How can I know who's right? My answer is to go back to the Bible! The Bible is quite complete and would not allow a false doctrine to "make it all the way through" without defeat.

Turn back to Ephesians 5:19. The passage uses two Greek words. ADO (singing) and PSALLO (making melody, or strumming). The word PSALLO is much like BAPTIZO (baptize) in that it denotes a pure action. Baptize means merely to immerse. The word doesn't tell us what to immerse into. We have to look further for this information (the context, normally). PSALLO means to strum or sing. The meaning to sing comes from strumming the vocal chords. It evolved to mean singing with accompaniment.

Notice this passage (Ephesians 5:19) Paul states specifically the accompaniment of the New Testament singing! Literally strumming the heart. Just as we know baptism in the New Testament doesn't mean baptism in blood, but water, we also know singing with the accompaniment of the heart is what PSALLO means in the New Testament. Let's go a step further and, for argument's sake, say that PSALLO does mean singing with instrumental accompaniment. Then such passages as James 5:13 would be violated (it's translated merely sing, not sing with an instrument) when a Christian went down the road singing praises to God! It would be like bringing half of the required tithe under the Old Testament! What this shows is that arguing from the language proves too much and shows the whole

argument to be faulty, regardless of how many PhD's the person making the argument has!!

A third argument is... "But God didn't say that we couldn't"! Let's remember again the very clear example made of Noah. God did not say Noah couldn't use pine and fiberglass. A proper respect for God's will and the authority of God leads Noah to do what God said... not what God didn't specifically condemn.

Let's go a step further, however, in this consideration. God has told us to put our desires (our "I like it's) aside in order to serve Him. Jesus in his discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well, told her that "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24). In a prayer to His father, He also said, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Thus far we see that in order to worship God, we have to do it "in truth" and that this truth is from "thy word." We either find where God has ordained it, or we are condemned by it! Can you find this practice among Christians in scripture? (I certainly cannot!)

The last argument in support of instrumental music that some resort to, is "**My preacher says it's OK,**" or "**you guys are the only ones around that believe this way.**" This is an argument that shouldn't be needed if we are practicing what we preach (I live by the Bible), but let's consider this approach anyway.

The fact of the matter is, that historically, organs and instruments of music in general have caused a great deal of controversy. **Virtually every time the instrument has been added into a denomination, it has been after a bitter fight. This fight, as recently as 100 years ago, was still going strong!**



The first organs were apparently introduced into the Roman Catholic Churches sometime between 600 and 700 AD. The Greek Orthodox (Eastern church) never has allowed them in!

Hear the words of the various **founders** of the denominations on this very subject:

John Calvin (founder of the Presbyterian church) "Musical instruments in celebrating praises to God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, the

restoration of the other shadows of the Law. The Papists, therefore have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews." (Calvin's Commentary on Psalm 33)

John Wesley, the reputed founder of the Methodist church is quoted by Adam Clarke to have said, "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen." (Clarke's Commentary, Vol. 14 p. 686)

Martin Luther, founder of the Lutheran Church, called the organ "an ensign of Baal" (One of the idols the Canaanites worshipped) (McClintocks Strong's Encyclopedia, Music, Vol. 6 p. 762)

The very founders of these large denominations recognized instrumental music for what it is... an addition of the Catholic Church for the purpose of catering to the carnal side of men.

Erasmus, a Roman Catholic of the 16th century, admitted this very thing. "We have brought into our churches, a certain operose and theatrical music... the church rings with the noise of trumpets, pipes and dulcimers; and human voices strive to bear their part with them. Men run to the church as to a theater, to have their ears tickled." He was commenting on I Corinthians 14:19. "however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.." Who was Erasmus? Merely the scholar that assembled the Greek manuscripts that were the basis of the King James translation of the Bible!



The earliest reference we have to instrumental music in the churches is by Justin Martyr (in 139 AD). "Plain singing is not childish, but only the singing with lifeless organs, with dancing and cymbals, etc. Whence the use of such instruments and other things fit for children are laid aside, and plain singing only retained." He is only explaining it did not exist! On what authority does it exist in the churches today, if the New Testament Christians of the first and second centuries didn't have them? Pure and simple carnality!

Charles Spurgeon (one of the greatest Baptist preachers that ever lived, who preached to 10,000 persons every Sunday in the

Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle, London, England), refused to allow instrumental music wherever he preached. When asked the reason, he said "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also! I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also." (I Corinthians 14:15) He then went on to add, "I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery! (ibid)

He obviously hit the nail right square on the head. Instruments of music *have no place in the worship* of God! Just because carnality has overrun the denominational world, does not mean that we have to be a part of it! The Lord's church still offers "pure" worship to God. A worship not tainted with carnality. Which is it for you? Carnality or Christianity? As we continue building the church of the New Testament, we see just how narrow the "truth" of God really is.

1) The traditions of men have the effect of destroying our worship to God. True / False

2) According to Jesus, what are the two possible sources of authority for each and every act in religion? Matthew 21:23-26 _____ & _____ What caused this issue to come up? Vs 12-13 _____

3) Which of the two possible sources of authority for instrumental music (in our worship to God) applies? _____

4) Who has an obligation to justify any religious practice that he is participating in? (I Peter 3:15) _____

5) A) Give a brief parallel between the effect of Noah using fiberglass and plywood, and our using instrumental music today.

B) Note I Peter 4:11 When you explain (why you do) a religious practice today, from where is your answer to come?

6) What kind of music has God specifically told us to use in our worship to Him? _____ and to use what accompaniment? _____

7) Explain why the fact that instrumental music was used in the Old Testament has no bearing on us today. _____



8) Why is the nature of the New covenant foreign to instrumental music? _____

9) What other Old Testament shadow could we compare instrumental music to? _____

10) What religious leader quoted in this lesson, made the same comparison? _____

11) What Greek word is often used in an attempt to justify instrumental music? _____

12) What was the original meaning of PSALLO? _____

13) How is it like BAPTIZO? _____

14) The only time in the New Testament it is used to designate an accompaniment, what accompaniment is designated? _____

_____ B) what passage? _____

15) To go further would be to _____

16) How would we violate James 5:13 if the word meant to sing with an accompaniment, rather than either to sing or accompany (make melody)? _____

17) How does the example of Noah answer the question of "but God didn't say we couldn't ? _____

18) How does John 4:24 & 17:17 relate to this study? _____

19) Who introduced the first organ into worship? _____

20) When were they introduced? _____

21) In what three denominations did the very founders denounce instrumental music? _____

22) Of what religious affiliation was Erasmus? _____

23) A) By whom and when was the earliest reference to instrumental music in the church? _____

B) What was he explaining? _____



24) What passage did Charles Spurgeon quote to show the carnality of instrumental music? _____

What was his religious affiliation? _____

25) In I Corinthians 14:7 Paul refers to instruments of music as what kind of things _____ making sounds?

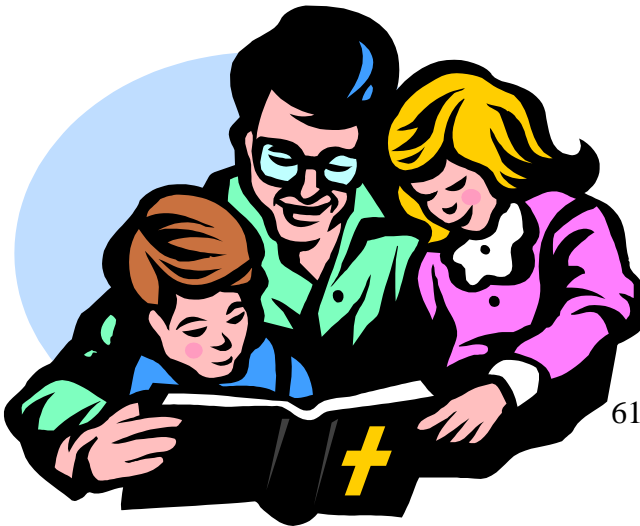
26) (Essay) Make a comparison between substituting coffee and donuts for the Lord's supper and instrumental music for singing. Explain why there is no way to claim to be a Christian and still worship where these practices go on.



"We, Christians, make use only of one organ or instrument, even the peaceful Word, with which we honor God; no longer with the old psaltery, trumpet, drum, cymbal, or pipe."

Clement of Alexandria—A. D. 190

I believe that after an honest study of this matter, you can see the arguments are not just something from a "narrow-minded church of Christ preacher" but a very real and important Bible principle. Let's "go back" to the kind of Christianity we read about in the Bible, not the newspaper!



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