

Instrumental Music In Our Worship

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One of the most striking and amazing differences between churches of Christ and many religious groups is the fact that churches of Christ do Not use instrumental (Mechanical) music in worship. Many are surprised to discover when they visit our church services that this is true. They may be not aware of our reasons for rejecting the use of Instrumental Music in our worship to God. But we must be aware that even those that are our fellow members do not fully understand the absence of Instrumental Music from our worship services. Perhaps, it would good to explain to those that we study with as well as to our friends in the community WHAT we believe about music in worship and WHY. There are so many reasons why we are not using instrumental music in our service to God. But these are few that we may look upon.

Instrumental Music is Not Authorized By The New Testament: It is always our aim to “*speak where the Bible speaks.*” (1 Pet. 4:11). When we read the New Testament we find that early Christians were taught only to sing. “*And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*” (Matt. 26:30, Mk. 14:26). The first century Christians did not use instrumental music in their worship, but they were singing hymns. “*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*” (Acts 16:25). The Bible is clear that they sang the songs of praises but not by using instrumental music, it is not mentioned. We find that Paul is quoting from the Psalmist in which there is expression. “*...and sing unto thy name.*” (Rom. 15:9, Ps. 18:49). “*What is it then? 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.*” (1 Cor. 14:15). “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*” (Eph. 5:19). We are doing what we have been commanded to do and that which we have told not to, we should not dare to do it. We don’t have authority to change what is in the Holy Book (Bible) or twist it so that it may seem to be amazing and attractive in the sight of man. Therefore we are admonished that; “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*” (Col. 3:16-17). “*...I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*” (Heb. 2:12). “*Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.*” (Jam. 5:13). These passages shows the totality of the New Testament teaching on

Instrumental Music in worship. On the other hand, I believe that there are some passages in the book of Revelation where music is mentioned, but I believe that these instances is obviously used in a symbolic way to stand for something else. Anyone may correct me on this if I'm wrong. For example, in Rev. 14:2-4 John heard the voice from heaven which is said to be "*And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth...*" (Rev. 14:2-4). A Catholic friend of mine made an argument that it indicates heavenly approval of instrumental music in worship. But it doesn't. I believe that the word used in this passage is symbolic. Because the same chapter talks about living creature like beasts, virgins, etc but it obvious that they are symbolic. I also believe that John used harps to suggest the sweetness of the singing which he heard just like thunder and sound of many waters represent the volume and the swelling rhythm of that heavenly singing. Again I may be wrong on this, anyone may correct me. But note, John does not say that he heard harps, but he heard voices that were sweet and that they were "*As the voice of many waters...*" (vs.2).

Any passage in the New Testament dealing with worship use specific word 'sing' than the general term "music" it limits us to do only what the word "sing" allows. Paul warns us that we should not go beyond what the scripture allow or beyond our learning. "*...that ye might learn in us not to think of men beyond that which is written...*" (1 Cor. 4:6). The absence of any mention of mechanical instruments being used in worship in the New Testament is easily understood especially when we realize that it was not the practice of the first century church to use the instruments.

Unity is commanded by the New Testament "Now I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1:10). "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus." (Rom. 15:5).

Throughout history, instrumental music has been disruptive of the unity of the church. It has been a source of strife and unnecessary division. Congregations have been split over it, yet non argues that it is essential.

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