

This morning we will be continuing in our worship series by looking at the topic of singing and how it relates to public worship. In the last part of this lesson, we will examine the question why we don't use musical instruments in our worship to God.

The first thing I want to do is to look at where we get our authority for the things we do in worship. This is important in understanding how we are to worship God. Notice what Jesus says after he is raised from the dead. ***Matthew 28:18 ... All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*** That word "power" is translated "authority" in many versions. Jesus is our authority; this is why Paul states to the Colossians, ***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. Colossians 3:17***

Since Jesus is our authority, we need to pay close attention to what he says regarding worship. ***John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*** If we believe the Bible to be true and recognize that Jesus is our authority, then we should respect three key words in this passage: MUST, SPIRIT, and TRUTH. Worshiping in spirit means worshipping from the heart and worshipping in truth means that we worship according to the word of God. ***John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*** This is why we strive to use the Bible as our authority and do not have creed books or any other doctrinal books in the church as authority.

Our authority comes from the NT, i.e. the new covenant. It is important for people to understand that when Jesus died he brought a new covenant into place making the old covenant obsolete and no longer binding on the Christian today. ***Col. 2:14*** teaches us that when Jesus died on the cross that he nailed the requirements of the old law to the cross which means it was put to death. The books of Hebrews and Galatians are good books that show how we are no longer under the old covenant but we are under the new. For instance, ***Heb. 8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.***

So our worship is to be regulated by the word found in the NT and not the OT. The reason why this is important is because some try to bring certain things over from the OT and make them apart of NT worship but you cannot do this and rightly divide the word of truth, because those laws and requirements are dead to us today. Besides this if you are going to bring over one thing from the old covenant, then you should bring over everything, including animal sacrifices. Paul would say ***Gal. 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*** Point is; if you are going to require part of the old law like circumcision, then you are obligated to the whole law. You can't pick and choose what you want to keep and what to discard

Now let's consider singing as a part of our worship to God. In 1 Cor. 14, Paul instructs the Corinthians on how to conduct a worship service and in verse 15 he mentions singing; so we conclude that singing was a part of the worship conducted by the early church. **LOOK AT WHAT THE NT SAYS ABOUT SINGING AND HOW IT IS TO BE DONE.** *Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; ... Colossians 3:16 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 hearts to the Lord.* From these verses we learn that there are two different purposes for singing in our worship to God.

The **FIRST PURPOSE** is that singing praises unto God should come from our heart. Now we can sing from the heart to God at other times outside the public worship. We have an example where singing is directed toward God outside of public worship in Acts 16:25. *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.* So whether you are in public worship or somewhere else we can sing praises to God through song.

The **SECOND PURPOSE** we learn from these passages is that when we sing we are teaching and admonishing one another. I like to refer to it as congregational teaching. Now the word "*admonishing*" means "*to warn.*" When we sing about God's amazing grace or we sing about how the judgment day is coming, these songs are to teach and admonish us about God's Word.

Another thing we need to realize is that our singing is to come from our heart so we should sing with emotion. There is a danger that we can get into when with familiar songs of just mouthing the words but really not thinking about them or putting our heart into them. One other thing I want to point out about Eph.5:19 & Col. 3:16 is that it is a command that we sing. Singing to God is not an option; so each of us is expected to sing. You see God doesn't care if you can't carry a tune; He wants your singing to come from your heart. So if there is nothing preventing you from singing, you need to follow this command and sing to God. There is one thing God wants from us and that is praise; the fact that everyone is to sing rules out solos or choirs. *1 Corinthians 14:15b ... I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.* So in our public worship let us all sing with understanding from our heart as we sing praises to God and by such let us teach and admonish one another.

QUESTION: Why does the church of Christ not use mechanical instruments of music in their worship to God? This is one area where the church differs from most denominations and thus is a question often asked. It is an

honest question and deserves an honest answer. Now, it would be just appropriate to ask those inquiring why they use the instrument in worship. Most of them don't have any idea of why they use the instrument other than they just know that they like them or they might say it adds so much to the worship service.

Someone might attempt to justify their use of the instrument by saying that they were used in the OT and certainly they were used in the OT. In fact, they were commanded by the Lord in 2 Chronicles 29:25 to be used and the Levites and the priest were to be the musicians. But we have discussed already that we are not living under the authority of the OT, so you can't go there for Biblical authority without taking it all; and no one wants to do that. So kindly ask you inquirer to show you one passage of scripture in the NT of Christ that authorizes its use in worship.

A danger that people face today in the religious world is that so many follow what they have always been taught without question. So they grow up in a denomination that uses the mechanical instruments and to them it seems natural to use them and do so without ever questioning it. Yet if they take an honest look at scripture they would soon realize that these instruments are additions to God Word's which makes them conflict with the "must worship in spirit and truth" commandment.

Before I begin to look at some of the most popular arguments for the use of mechanical instruments I want to examine the history of the instrument in worship. It's generally agreed by countless scholars and historians that mechanical instruments were not used in the early church. In fact earliest mentioning of their introduction didn't come until the 5th or 6th century. In the Catholic Church Pope Vitalian sanctioned their use for the first time in 670 AD but was not without controversy. Notice what the Catholic Encyclopedia says, "...the first Christians were of too spiritual fiber to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice." There Encyclopedia also says this, "*The rejection of all musical instruments from Christian worship is consistent among the fathers*" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia 10:106*)

The idea of using mechanical instruments didn't catch on very fast and has always caused great controversy. It wasn't until 1851 and beyond that people started embracing their use. I want to share with several quotes from denominational preachers from the past.

- John Calvin founder of the Presbyterian Church: "*Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps or the restoration of the other shadows of the law.*" (Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Vol, I, p. 539)

- John Wesley founder of the Methodist Church: *“I have no objection to instruments of music, in our chapels provided they are neither heard nor seen,”*
- Adam Clark famous Methodist commentator: *“Music as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor.”*
- Charles H. Spurgeon a well known Baptist preacher: *“I would as soon attempt to pray to God with machinery as to sing to him with machinery.”*
- J. H. Garrison of the Christian Church: *“There is no command in the NT, Greek or English commanding the use of the instrument.”*

You see at one time all these different denomination represented here understood that mechanical instrument music was not to be used in worship to God. Yet, sadly every single of one these denominations now use these instruments in their worship services and sad to say this is a movement that is beginning the effect some congregations of the church of Christ.

Now one thing people love to say is that the NT doesn't specifically say that you can't use them. In other words they want a verse that says do not use musical instruments. Using this kind of logic a person could engage in all kind of sinful things because the Bible doesn't specifically say I can't smoke marijuana or snort cocaine up my nose so it will be ok. But what we need to understand is the Bible does specifically teach in Eph 5:19 and Col. 3:16 how to make music and that excludes everything else. When the word of God commands us to sing and names the instrument as our heart, then it has excluded everything else including the musical instruments. This principle of exclusion is more easily understood if we argue that we should use hamburgers and coke for the Lords Supper. We all understand that would violate scripture, but my question is show me the passage that say's I can't use hamburgers and coke? We need Biblical authority for what we do in worship.

Another argument that is made is that the use of an instrument is no different than using a song book or a song leader. So they would say that an instrument is simply an aid and not addition. Well the first thing we need to do is define what an aid and addition is.

An aid is something that is used that doesn't alter or change a command. An addition is something that is added and does change the command. For instance when we use different dishes to transport the Lords Supper, these dishes are

aids and do not change the Lords Supper. However if we add hamburgers and coke to the Lords Supper, then we have made an addition and changed the command of God.

The Bible says we are to sing which is using the voice. This voice is to speak in song, teach and admonish one another, and make a melody from the heart. Now if you have a song book that has the words and tune of the song being song, does that alter the sound of the voice in teaching, admonishing, making melody from the heart, etc. No it doesn't change the command in any way, shape or form. What about a song leader? Does that alter the command any? No it doesn't. What about the mechanical instrument? Yes – it has added a different element to the music thus altering the commandment. So a song leader or song books are aids. The song leader is choosing the songs and starting them and the song books contains the words that we are singing. In both of the instances singing is what is being done and that command has not been changed. However when we add a musical instrument and it is being played, something other than singing is occurring so musical instruments are addition and not an aid.

Another argument is made from the Greek word “Psallo” is used for “sing; making melody.” They will say that this word means to play on a string instrument and so we should use instrument today. First of all, I agree the Psallo at one point carried the meaning playing a musical instrument. But let us understand that words can go through many changes as it goes through history and it's important that we find out its meaning of the word for the time of the NT. I read where the meanings for the word Psallo from 17 different lexicons were: (1 to pluck the hair, 2. to twang the bowstring, 3. to twitch a carpenters line, 4. to touch the chords of a musical instrument, 5. to touch the chords of the human heart, that is to sing.)

Now what should we do with these definitions. Should we just pick and choose the one we want this word “*psallo*” to mean or should we seek to find out what the meaning of the word was during the NT time. Well how do we determine which definition goes with NT time. Greek expert named Sophocles, a native Greek who taught Greek for 38 years at Harvard University, took on the daunting task of examining the Roman Period which covered 146 BC to 1100 AD and he examined almost 600 authors during this 1200 year period and declares that not a single example Psallo throughout this period of time can be found involving or implying the use of instrument. Instead every time it meant to chant or sing a religious hymn. When you consider all the translators, every translation does not ever render the Greek word Psallo as meaning a musical instrument and the reason why is because the word Psallo in the NT period only meant to sing.

Then there are some that will say there are instruments in heaven therefore it's ok for us to use instruments in our worship to God. Verses like Revelation 5:8 are sited that says ... *having every one of them HARPS*. This is just another misuse of the scriptures. A condition in heaven does not dictate that condition on earth. We learn in Matt 22:30 that there are no marriages in heaven; do we conclude by that that there are to be no marriages on earth: of course not.

After failing to discover a biblical command, a binding example, or a necessary inference for the use of mechanical instruments in Christian worship, we do not use them in worship because we want to worship in spirit and in truth.

Invitation. *Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*