

LESSON #20

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN'WORSHIP

TEXTS: Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13

INTRODUCTION:

All religious organizations are agreed that music has a place in the New Testament worship, but not all agree as to whether it should be vocal or instrumental, or vocal accompanied by an instrument.

Upon visiting the services of the Church of Christ for the first time, many express surprise that we don't use an instrument of music.

One of the most often asked questions while studying in homes is, "Why doesn't the Church of Christ have a piano or organ?"

Many members of the church don't know why the instrument is not used. Does it really matter?

Let's go to the Bible and let it answer our questions.

You will recall we studied in our last lesson five kinds of worship, also to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.

In other lessons we have studied examples of obedience and disobedience, and it does make a difference. Remember Nadab and Abihu, Jericho, Naaman the Leper, Noah's ark, etc.

Let's open our Bibles and read the record of music mentioned in the New Testament.

Matthew 26:30 " And when they had sung. a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives."

Acts 16:25 "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

Romans 15:9 "Therefore will I give praise unto thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name."

I Corinthians 14:15 "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."

Ephesians 5:19 "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord."

DISCUSSION:

PRO:

"The Old Testament contains examples of the use of instruments in worship, such as Psalms 33:2."

CON:

1. If we bind the instrument, then it must bind the instrument with ten strings - no more or less.
2. We must keep the whole law not one item (James 2:10), therefore, there must be the burning of incense, etc.
3. Since we are dead to the law (Romans 7:1-4), we cannot make it binding upon us.
4. 'Woe to them that invent to themselves instruments of music, like David' (Amos 5:23; 6:1).

PRO:

"The Bible doesn't say not to have instruments in New Testament worship."

CON:

1. The Bible doesn't say not to use corn bread and buttermilk in the Lord's Supper.
2. When the Bible gives a "how to" it needs not to give a "how not to." This is why Noah used gopher wood and not oak.
3. Paul tells us "how to" make melody (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), this is to be by singing.

PRO:

"There are instruments in heaven, therefore, alright to have them in church."

CON:

1. The terms are "as" and "like." Revelation does not say there are instruments in heaven.
2. Infants will be in heaven, but they are not church members.

PRO:

"The Greek work 'Psalo' means to pluck an instrument in Ephesians 5:19."

CON:

1. Paul says the making of melody "or the plucking an instrument" is in the heart.
2. The instrument played has to be one that can be plucked, therefore, couldn't be a piano or organ.
3. Everyone must have an instrument, therefore, the heart.

PRO:

"I don't see anything wrong with it. Besides, I like it."

CON:

1. This is the only argument for instrumental music in worship when the facts are known.
2. These examples should be sufficient warnings to us.

Chamber's Encyclopedia

"The organ is said to have been first introduced into church music by Pope Vitalian I, in 666."

Martin Luther (founder of Lutheran church)

"The organ in the worship of God is an ensign of Baal."

John Calvin (founder of Presbyterianism)

"Musical instruments in celebrating the 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."

John Wesley (founder of Methodism)

"I have no objections to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither HEARD nor SEEN."

Adam Clarke (Methodist, and one of the world's greatest Bible commentators) "I am an old man and an old minister, and I here declare that I have never known instrumental music to be productive of any good in the worship of God, and have reason to believe it has been productive of much evil. Music as a science I admire and esteem, but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and I here register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Infinite Spirit who requires His followers to worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Charles Spurgeon (greatest preacher the Baptist church ever produced, and for 20 years preached to 10,000 persons every Sunday in the Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle, London, England)

When asked why he did not use the organ in worship, he quoted I Corinthians 14:15 and added "I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery."

3. Alexander Campbell (a Restoration Movement leader and one of the greatest scholars of all time)

"...that all persons who have no spiritual discernment, taste, or relish for their spiritual meditations, consolations, and sympathies of renewed hearts, should call for such aid, is but natural. Pure water from the flinty rock has no attractions for mere toper or winebibber. A little alcohol, or genuine Cognac brandy, or good old Madeira, is essential to the beverage to make it truly refreshing. So to those who have no real devotion or spirituality in them, and whose animal nature flags under the oppression of church service, I think ... that instrumental music would not only be a desideratum, but an essential prerequisite to fire up their souls to even animal devotion. But I presume, to all spiritual-minded Christians, such aids would be as a cowbell in a concert."

11. But still there are efforts to justify instrumental music in worship.

Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God."

James 5:13 "Is any among you suffering? let him sing praise. Is any cheerful? let him sing thy praise."

Hebrews 13:15 "Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name."

Hebrews 2:12 "I will declare my name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise."

Revelation 5:8, 9 "And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints, a they sing a new song,"

Revelation 14:2, 3 reads: "And I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sing as it were a new song before the throne."

Revelation 15:2, 3 reads: "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that came off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

These Scriptures teach that the type of music used by the Church in the Bible was vocal, singing.

The melody was made in the heart of man, not on an instrument made by man. The Bible is silent on instrumental music in the worship of the Church. If used by people of God today, it is used without any authority in the Church that Christ built.

1. Various religious leaders have written and spoken of music in the Church. Many church historians acknowledge that the instrument did not enter "Christian Worship" until centuries after the beginning of the Lord's Church.

Justin Martyr (139 A.D.)

"The use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches, as it was among the Jews in their infant state, but only the use of plain song."

Lyman Coleman (Presbyterian historian) "Such musical accompaniments were gradually introduced; but they can hardly be assigned to a period earlier than the fifth and sixth centuries. Organs were unknown in the church until the eighth or ninth century. Previous to this they had their place in the theatre rather than in the church. They were never regarded with favor in the Eastern church, and were vehemently opposed in many places in the west."

- a. Naaman, II Kings 5:11
- b. 'There is a way which seemeth right" (Proverbs 14:12).
- c. 'In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men' (Matthew 15:9).

CONCLUSION:

1. Worship is to be to the glory of God and must be that which pleases Him. We cannot know what pleases Him except what the Bible commands.

The Bible commands:

- 1. Speak in song (Ephesians 5:19)
- 2. Teach (Colossians 3:16)
- 3. Sing with spirit and understanding (I Corinthians 14:15)
- 4. Praise God (Hebrews 2:12)
- 5. Make melody in heart (Ephesians 5-19)

The Voice can, the Instrument cannot obey these commands...

May Our interest be in pleasing God rather than ourselves.