

Instrumental Music #2

Introduction. As we conclude our lesson, remember that a fundamental truth of religion is the submission of the will of man to the will of God. The requirement of submission to the will of God is characteristic of every age. God has regulated worship from the beginning of time and we will continue to examine a particular aspect of acceptable worship today (Genesis 4:3-4; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:4).

I. *Continued Arguments For Instrumental Music*

- A. No one has ever yet contended or argued that instrumental music should be added to the worship because the New Testament scriptures, as we have them given to us today by the providence of God, teach that it should be used.
- B. Not one passage in the New Testament has ever been produced which even indirectly mentions mechanical instruments of music. Ironically, most people who want to justify instrumental music must go everywhere except to the instructions given to the New Testament church.
- C. Being unable to make this contention, those who use instrumental music have been forced to defend its use upon other grounds. The following arguments are made:
 1. Instrumental music can be practiced at home, therefore it can be practiced in the church.
 - a) Many things are morally right but are religiously wrong. For example, the washing of hands and the washing of feet (Mark 7:3-7; John 13:1-15).
 - b) Instrumental music is not wrong in itself. If that were true it would be wrong everywhere, but it is wrong to add it to Christian worship when God has not told us to use it.
 2. Instrumental music will be present in heaven.
 - a) This argument is similar in nature to the argument from the Old Testament. Harps are mentioned in Revelation 5:8-9; 14:2-3; 15:2-3.
 - b) To grant this does not yet prove that we should have it in the church, or else we must also have angels, infants, golden bowls of incense, a throne, etc.
 - c) Just as the rules for the past age of the Old Testament differ from the rules of the present New Testament age, so the rules for the future affairs of heaven differ from the rules of the present practices on earth.
 - (1) For example, in Matthew 22:30 Jesus tells us that there will be no marriage in heaven.
 - (2) However, those who forbid marriage on earth are guilty of

apostasy (1 Timothy 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:4).

3. Playing an instrument is praising God with the talents God has given me.
 - a) I have the gift of barbecue cooking. Could we use my barbecue for the Lord's supper? What about a talented dancer, animal trainer or athlete?
 - b) Again, if we alter any of God's commands, we have transgressed the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).
4. The Greek word *psallo* from which we have the translation "make melody" in our English Bibles also means to accompany the singing with instrumental music.
 - a) If this be true, then instrumental music is commanded and is not a matter of choice with those who would obey God. It would be imperative for each one who sings to have his own instrument and do his own playing since the command is individual and personal in its meaning, as noted by the use of the reflexive pronoun in the original language (cf. Luke 23:28). Therefore, someone else could no more do the playing for a person than they could sing for him.
 - (1) The words in the original language combined with the pronouns teach reciprocal (one to another) action that takes place at the same time.
 - (2) Each Christian simultaneously singing to one another in the assembly is the obvious action involved in the command found in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16.
 - b) Just as many words change in definition over the years, *psallo* evolved from the use of instrumental accompaniment in the Classical Greek period (900 B.C.-330 B.C.) to singing without instrumental music in the Koine Greek period (330 B.C.-330 A.D.). The various meanings of *psallo* are as follows:
 - (1) "To pluck the hair."
 - (2) "To twang a bowstring."
 - (3) "The twitch a carpenter's line."
 - (4) "To touch the chords of a musical instrument."
 - (5) "To sing with an instrument."
 - (6) "To sing without an instrument."
 - c) Notice that *psallo* is a verb. Verbs must always act upon nouns. For example, if I say the word "drive," the word "automobile" is not within the word itself. If I say, "Drive me to the store," it is within the word itself. If I say, "You drive me to drink," then a completely different meaning is indicated.
 - (1) Notice that in Psalm 18:49, 33:2, 98:5, and 149:3 the equivalent word for *psallo* is used (*zamar*) and it always

specifies the instrument, whether it be a harp, musical instruments or singing. The noun is not in the verb.

- (2) Where the Old Testament authorized praising God on a harp, the New Testament substitutes praising God in the heart (Ephesians 5:19). God leaves out the harp and puts in the heart.
- (3) God specifies the "instrument" to accompany our singing, just like He has specified the elements of the Lord's supper. He left out the mechanical instrument in the New Testament, just like He left out the passover lamb in the Lord's supper. To add instruments is to act without divine authority, just the same as if we added another element to the Lord's supper.
- (4) It has been shown that the writers of the first several centuries of the post-apostolic period employed *psallo* simply to denote the idea of "singing," or else they used the term in its classical sense only metaphorically, e.g., in Ephesians 5:19, plucking the strings of one's heart in praise to God.
- (5) Even virtually all our English translations and lexicons, written by men who were invariably members of churches that use instruments, translate the words very carefully so as to not even give a hint of the use of instrumental music. This should be dramatic testimony to the fact that the cream of the world's scholarship has not subscribed to the notion that *psallo* inheres a mechanical instrument of music.

II. ***Historical Perspective Of Instrumental Music***

- A. Although mechanical instruments of music were available for use in the first century (they were used in the worship of both the Jews and Greeks), the early church chose not to use them.
- B. The undeniable testimony of history is that the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship was introduced into the worship of the church many centuries after its inception.
- C. Through the years, as mechanical instruments of music were introduced into the worship of the various denominations, well-known religious leaders protested their use. Notice the following quotes from Bible scholars:
 1. "The use of organs in churches is ascribed to Pope Vitalian (657-672 A.D.). Constantine Copronymos sent an organ with other presents to King Pepin of France in 767 A.D. Charlemagne received one as a present from the Caliph Haroun al Rashid, and had it put up in the cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle. The attitude of the churches toward the organ varies. It shared to some extent the fate of images except that it never was an object of worship. The Greek

- church disapproved the use of organs. The Latin church introduced it pretty generally, but not without the protest of eminent men, so that even in the Council of Trent a motion was made, though not carried, to prohibit the organ at least in the mass" (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 4, p. 4309).
2. "In view of the controversies over the use of instrumental music in worship which have been so violent in the British and American Protestant churches, it is an interesting question whether instruments were employed by the primitive Christians. We know that instruments performed an important function in the Hebrew temple service and in the ceremonies of the Greeks. At this point, however, a break was made with all previous practice, and although the lyre and flute were sometimes employed by the Greek converts, as a general rule, the use of instruments in worship was condemned. Many of the fathers, speaking of religious song, make no mention of instruments; others like Clement of Alexandria and St. Chrysostom, refer to them only to denounce them" (Edwin Dickinson, *History of Music in the Western Church*, p. 54).
 3. "Our church does not use mechanical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize" (Thomas Aquinas, *Bingham's Antiquities*, Vol. II, p. 483).
 4. "Musical instruments, in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many of other things, from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise, but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far from pleasing to Him" (John Calvin, *Commentary on Psalm 33 and on 1 Samuel 18:1-9*).
 5. "It has been proved, by an appeal to historical facts, that the church, although lapsing more and more into defection from the truth and into the corruption of apostolic practice, had no instrumental music for twelve hundred years; and that the Calvinistic Reformed Church ejected it from its services as an element of Popery, even the Church of England having come very nigh to its extrusion from her worship. The historical argument, therefore, combines with the scriptural and the confessional to raise a solemn and powerful protest against its employment by the Presbyterian Church. It is heresy in the sphere of worship" (John Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, p. 179).
 6. "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen" (John Wesley, *Clarke's Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 684).

III. ***Final Implications Of Instrumental Music***

- A. Instrumental music transgresses and disrespects the authority of Christ by injecting something into Christian worship which the Lord and His apostles have not taught (2 John 9).
- B. Instrumental music corrupts and makes our worship vain in the practice of that which God has not taught (Matthew 15:7-9).
- C. Instrumental music creates dissension and division by being offensive to the conscience of many (1 Corinthians 10:28).
- D. We cannot worship God in spirit and truth and use instrumental music for it is no part of "all truth" revealed to the apostles by the Holy Spirit (John 4:24; 16:13).
- E. We cannot walk by faith and practice instrumental music, for it is not taught in the word of God and faith comes by God's word (Romans 10:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7).
- F. Instrumental music is no part of the divine pattern and we corrupt the plan for God's house and therefore labor in vain when we use it (Hebrews 8:1-7; Psalm 127:1).

Conclusion. If the auto mechanic is instructed to do a "tune-up," that does not mean he is authorized to rebuild the transmission. If a physician authorizes a certain medication, the pharmacist is not at liberty to improvise otherwise. The wheelchair symbol authorizes a handicapped person to park in a certain place; there are heavy fines for ignoring this authority designation. Each day, in many different ways, we are required to respect the limitations of authority. So it is with worship; we are authorized to sing. We are not authorized to "play." It is a matter of authority. Some respect the authority of the New Testament; others do not. They yield to the impulse of "will-worship" -- the practice of which embraces both that which is "forbidden" and "unbidden." Such disobedience brings only condemnation.