

Instrumental Music in Worship – Part 2

Part one of this series of articles on instrumental music in worship dealt with all of the New Testament passages that authorize the use of mechanical instruments of music in the church's worship to God. For those who read that article, you will recall that the page was blank. The reason is because there are no New Testament passages that authorize the use of mechanical instruments of music in the church's worship to God. One can search from Matthew through Revelation and will not find any such authorization. That being the case, why do people use pianos, organs, guitars and entire orchestras to accompany their singing in worship? Four answers to this question come to my mind.

First, some today use mechanical instruments of music to accompany their singing in worship because of their misunderstanding of the covenant to which we are now accountable. These individuals hark back to the Old Testament for their authority, citing the Psalms and their occasional references to instruments as proof that it is acceptable to employ these instruments in their worship to God. Granted, some of the psalmists did give instruction regarding the use of instruments (e.g., Psalm 150), but then again, Psalm 20:3 says, "Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah." If the Psalms constitute authority for instrumental music in worship offered by the New Testament church, then does this passage authorize us to offer animal sacrifices today as well? By inspiration the apostle Paul wrote a great deal about the fact that the Old Testament is no longer our authority. Instead, having been nailed to the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:14), the Old Testament is now for our learning (Romans 15:4). Today we are under law to Christ, not Moses (I Corinthians 9:21).

Secondly, some today use mechanical instruments of music to accompany their singing in worship because they don't see the need for authority for what they do in worship. The article that showed there is no New Testament authority for these instruments in worship would not phase these folks. According to their thinking, times have changed, society has changed and people have changed. Consequently, those who profess to follow Christ need to change as well. We need to adapt our teachings and practices to whatever is in greatest demand. This attitude is not restricted to their determination of the type of music they wish to use in worship. It carries over into other aspects of worship as well as daily living and the doctrines of their churches. Peter urged, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." (I Peter 4:11). The phrase, "oracles of God" means "the words or utterances of God." That we have God's authority for what we do in worship is critical for it is God whom we are worshipping and it is therefore His prerogative to tell mankind how He wants to be worshipped.

Thirdly, some today use mechanical instruments of music to accompany their singing in worship because they just don't care one way or another. As one man told me, "I like the piano and I'm going to keep using it." Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23). Doing something because we want to do it that way does not make it right. We need to care about God's will or else it will cost us eternally.

Finally, some today use mechanical instruments of music to accompany their singing in worship because they don't know the Scriptures. Of course, ignorance is not an excuse (Acts 17:30-31). That being the case, would we not all be wise to carefully study this matter with open minds and open Bibles? One man with whom I spoke said that since he didn't introduce the instrument into his church's worship, he wouldn't be held accountable for its use. He said this while he himself continued to worship with the instrument. He did not want to know what the Bible said because as far as he was concerned it wasn't his problem. II Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Ignorance of God's Word will not render an exemption from God's judgment.

This discussion is far from being a “denominational thing” as some like to call it. Likewise, it is far from being a matter of little consequence. It is a matter of authority; God’s authority. Does the New Testament authorize the use of mechanical instruments of music in the church’s worship to God? No, it does not.

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