

The Music Question #2

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When it is pointed out that the New Testament only authorizes singing (vocal music), there are those who make arguments to try to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church. This study answers some of those arguments.

1) ***“You use a pitch pipe.”***

Merriam-Webster defines music as a succession of tones or sounds. This is not what a pitch pipe produces. A song leader may blow a pitch pipe to obtain the initial key note of the song to be sung. We are commanded to sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), and obtaining the pitch of a song is included in the command to sing. When a pitch pipe is used, we are not singing and pitch-piping — we are just singing. However, when a mechanical instrument is used, there is both singing and playing. That’s the difference!

2) ***“A mechanical instrument is merely an aid like songbooks, communion plates, lights, hearing aids, eye glasses, and canes are aids.”*** This requires us to distinguish between aids and additions. An assistive cane may aid one in walking, but with or without the cane, one is still walking. If one walks for awhile and then rides a scooter, he is no longer just walking. He has added another mode of travel. When we use songbooks, we are not singing and song-booking, we are just

singing. When a mechanical instrument is introduced, there is the addition of another kind of music. A communion plate is merely an aid. But, to put grape jelly on the unleavened bread in the Lord’s supper would be an addition! If you try to justify the use of mechanical instruments as an aid to the singing, upon what basis would you object to the use of grape jelly on the communion bread as an aid to the eating?

3) ***“It is a God-given talent for some to play.”*** It is not a matter of talent or of ability, but of authority. Where in the New Testament has the Lord authorized its use? If mechanical instrumental music is acceptable in the worship of the church because it is a talent for some to play, then it would make every other talent permissible in the worship of the church. Some are talented carpenters, cooks, and sports players. Are you going to include carpentry, cooking, and sports playing in the worship of the church? If not, why not?

4) ***“We have it in our homes, why not in the church?”*** The home is a divine institution separate and distinct from the church (Gen. 2:18-24; Eph. 3:10-11). There are things permissible in the home which are not permissible in the church (1 Cor. 11:22, 34). If you are going to bring mechanical instruments into

the church because we have them in our homes, are you going to bring everything else we have in our homes into the church? If not, why not?

5) ***“Nowhere does the Bible say not to have it.”*** It doesn’t have to. The statement or command to do one thing only authorizes the doing of that thing; the doing of others is in effect forbidden. When God commanded Noah, “Make thee an ark of gopher wood...” (Gen. 6:14), He didn’t have to tell Noah not to use maple, hickory, walnut, pine, sycamore and every other kind of wood! When the Bible says “sing” (Heb. 2:12), that only authorizes singing! Can you imagine how enormous the Bible would be if God had to specifically mention everything not to do in addition to what He specifically said to do? We couldn’t get it through the door!

6) ***“It will be in heaven.”*** There is not a man on earth who can prove there ever has been, there is now, or there ever will be a mechanical instrument in heaven. “Oh, but...” someone says, “... they are mentioned in Revelations!” First of all, it’s *Revelation*; not *Revelations*. Secondly, the book uses figurative language as the very first verse says, “...he sent and signified it...” Third, are you going to bring everything into the church that is

mentioned in Revelation? “But, Revelation 5:8 mentions harps.” It also mentions “...golden vials full of odours...” Do you have these? Golden vials represented “...the prayers of saints.” And verse 9 says, “...they sung...” “But Revelation 14:2 talks about ‘... harpers harping with their harps.’” The text says, “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” (ASV). Do you have waters and great thunder? He heard something that sounded like harpers harping with their harps. What were they doing? Verse 3 says, “And they sung as it were a new song...” Think about it: what would a spiritual, immortal being be doing with a literal, temporal harp?

7) **“It was used in the Old Testament.”** Yes it was, because God commanded its use (2 Chr. 29:25; Ps. 81:1-4). Are you going to bring everything in the Old Testament into the church? Animal sacrifices? Incense? Polygamy? The Old Testament was temporary — till Christ (Gal. 3:16, 19; Col. 2:14). We live under the laws of the New Testament (Gal. 6:2).

8) **“The Psalms have not been taken away.”** The Psalms are part of the law which has been done away (Jn. 10:34; Ps. 82:6; Jn.

12:34; Ps. 89:36; Jn. 15:25; Ps. 35:19). If you’re going to bring into the worship mechanical instruments because they are included in the Psalms, what about everything else mentioned in Psalms? If you come with your trumpet, do you have your “burnt offerings” (Ps. 66:13), “incense of rams...bullocks with goats” (Ps. 66:15)? If ever there was a time to bring mechanical instrumental music into New Testament worship, it would have been Romans 15:9 or Hebrews 2:12, when the writers quoted the Psalms. On both occasions, they quoted passages that mention singing; not playing!

9) **“The reason the early church didn’t use it is because they didn’t have musical instruments in that day.”** It is foolish to reason that we should have it because of its use in the Old Testament and then turn around and say they had none in New Testament times! Ever read Genesis 4:21?

10) **“The apostles went into the temple and Jewish synagogues and worshipped with instruments.”** The apostles went into the temple and synagogues as Acts 3:1; 17:1 and other passages affirm. Presence does not prove approval. How do you know they worshipped or engaged in the use of instrumental music? It’s all

assumption! Why did they go into the temple and the synagogues? Acts 5:20-21 records, “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life....” In Acts 17, “...Paul... reasoned with them out of the scriptures” (v. 2). All indications are they went in to teach the truth, and they must have taught some things they didn’t like as they were run out occasionally!

11) **“The Greek word ‘psallo’ authorizes instrumental music.”** We are not dealing with the meaning of the word in classic Greek, but its meaning in the context of the New Testament. Thayer’s Lexicon says, “...in the N.T., to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song...” W. E. Vine says, “...in the N.T., to sing a hymn, sing praise...” The instrument or thing ‘psalloed’ is the heart (Eph. 5:19). If a mechanical instrument inheres in the word “Psallo”, then it would be wrong not to have it and we would all have to play it! If the passages can be obeyed without a mechanical instrument, then mechanical instruments are not included in them!

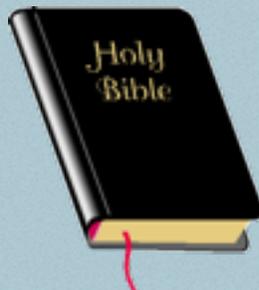
12) **“We like it, we want it, and we are going to have it.”** This is what it boils down to. To worship as we want without regard for the will of the Lord is to be guilty of will worship (Col. 2:23)!

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