

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11).

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The Music Question #1

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Whether it is Scriptural for the church to use mechanical instruments of music in worship unto God today is a question unsettled in the minds of many. This issue is not because the word of the Lord is unsettled. “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” (Ps. 119:89). Nor is it due to a lack of information on the matter. There are many passages that bear on the subject as we shall see in our study. And this question does not exist because of any ambiguity of the Scriptures. “...when ye read, ye may understand...” (Eph. 3:4).

1) There Are Two Kinds Of Music. There is vocal music — produced by the human voice (a capella, singing). And there is mechanical music — produced by machines or machinery (musical instruments). The question is, “Which kind of music has the Lord authorized?”

2) Mechanical Music Was Used Under The Old Testament. The Jews used musical instruments in worship unto God under the Old Testament. The reason why they did so is God commanded their use. It is said of Hezekiah, king of Judah, “And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the

commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets” (2 Chr. 29:25). Also, Psalm 81:1-4 records, “Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.”

3) We Are No Longer Under The Constraint Of The Old Law. The Bible is clear that the law of God given by Moses was temporary (till Christ) and has been abolished (nailed to the cross). Galatians 3:19 & 16 show that the law of Moses contained in the Old Testament served till the seed should come, and the seed is Christ. Therefore, the law was not permanent; it lasted for only a limited period of time. Paul said of Christ, “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances...” (Eph. 2:15). And again, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14).

4) We Are Under The Law To Christ. Being married to Christ, we are dead to the law and delivered from the law (Rom. 7:1-7), and are subject unto Christ in every thing (Eph. 5:22-32). In 2 Corinthians 3:6-14, Paul taught that “the old testament” was done away (vv. 7, 11, 14) and abolished (v. 13) and “the new testament” remains (v. 11). Paul wrote, “...being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ...” (1 Cor. 9:21). The Galatians were taught to “...fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Hebrews says, “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should not place have been sought for the second” (8:7). “...He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified...” (10:9-10). In the last day, it is the word of Christ that shall judge us (Jn. 12:48). Thus, it becomes a matter of reading the New Testament to find out the will and word of Christ concerning the music question. Let us be determined to do what He says.

5) The Scope Of New Testament Teaching. There are a total of ten passages in the New Testament that deal with this issue. As you read each Scripture, ask yourself this question: “Which kind of music is involved here: vocal or mechanical?”

Matthew 26:30: “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”

Mark 14:26: “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”

Acts 16:25: “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.”

Romans 15:9: “And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause, I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.”

1 Corinthians 14:15: “What is it then? 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 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.”

Hebrews 2:12: “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”

Hebrews 13:15: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

James 5:13: “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”

Some observations from these verses: (1) 1 Corinthians 14:15 is the only passage that mentions singing *with* something. Notice it does not mention mechanical accompaniment, but singing with spirit and understanding. (2) Ephesians 5:19 says, “...making melody in your heart...” It does not allude to a mechanical instrument of any kind. Melody is made in the heart. (3) The only kind of music mentioned in the church and connected with the praise of God in the New Testament is singing (Heb. 2:12). (4) Hebrews 13:15 speaks of “...the fruit of our lips...” Does a mechanical instrument have lips? No, but you do. (5) The music involved demands speaking to yourselves (Eph. 5:19) and

teaching and admonishing one another (Col. 3:16). These demands can only be met by singing. (6) If a mechanical instrument is included in any of these verses, it would be wrong not to have it, and we would all have to play it — for whatever these verses teach you to do, they teach everyone else to do. (7) The passages mention singing (*sung, sang, sing, singing*), without a word said about playing a mechanical instrument of any kind.

6) **The Silence Of The Scriptures.** God’s silence is not permissive, but prohibitive (Lev. 10:1-2; Heb. 7:14). When it came into David’s mind to build a house for God, the Lord said, “...spake I word...saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?” (2 Sam. 7:7). The implication is: Had God wanted David to build a house, He would have said something about it. Had the Lord wanted us to play a mechanical instrument in worship unto Him today, He would have said something about it! The fact that “...no such commandment” (Acts 15:24) has been given answers this question for those determined to do all in the Lord’s name (Col. 3:17).

Our next article will answer arguments made to try to justify the use of mechanical instruments in worship today.

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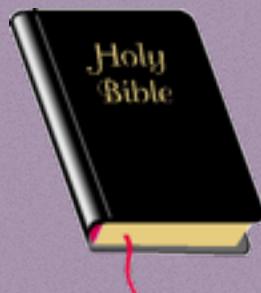
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