

## Why We Sing and Do Not Play

*John Isaac Edwards*

One of the things observed when folks make their visit with us is the absence of mechanical instruments of music in worship unto God. We are sometimes asked why it is that we sing and do not play. These words are being written in answer to this question.

**1) There Are Two Kinds of Music.** We must first recognize that there are two kinds of music: vocal (produced by the voice) and mechanical (produced by a mechanical instrument). The question is, “Which kind of music has the Lord authorized?”

**2) Mechanical Instruments Used in the Old Testament.** In the Old Testament, God commanded the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship. 2 Chronicles 29:25 records of King Hezekiah, “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.” The Psalmist said, “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” (Ps. 81:1-4). The people of God used mechanical instruments of music in Old Testament worship because God commanded it.

**3) We Do Not Live Under the Old Testament.** The Old Testament which commanded the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is no longer binding. We are “...dead to the law...” (Rom. 7:4) and “...delivered from the law...” (Rom. 7:6). It has been “...done away...” and “...abolished” (2 Cor. 3:7, 11,

13-14; Eph. 2:15). Paul wrote the Colossians, “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). Thus, we do not go to Jerusalem to worship, burn incense or offer animal sacrifices in our worship, or do other things the Jews were required to do under the law of Moses.

**4) We Live Under the New Testament.** Paul mentioned in his letter to the Corinthians that we are “... under the law to Christ...” (1 Cor. 9:21). He appealed to the Galatians, “...fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). The question now is, “Which kind of music has the Lord authorized in the New Testament to be used in worship unto God?”

**5) Ten Passages in the New Testament.** There are ten passages in the New Testament that deal with the kind of music to be used in worship unto God. As you

read these passages, ask yourself the 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."

If these passages include a mechanical instrument, we would be required to use it and it would be wrong not to use it. Also, whatever these

passages say, they say to all of us alike. Therefore, if they include a mechanical instrument all of us would have to play. If not, why not? The fact is, all of these passages say to sing and not a word is said in any of them about playing on a mechanical instrument of any kind.

6) **The Silence of the Scriptures.** The Lord does not have to say, "Thou shalt not..." for a thing to be wrong. A thing is unauthorized, contrary to the scriptures, and wrong when there is "...no such commandment" (Acts 15:24).

There is commandment in the New Testament to sing but no such commandment to play. Thus, we sing and do not play. In light of these things, we ask, "Why do you play?" Can you show us where the Lord authorized such?

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