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Church Music...

Mechanical Instrumental Worship in the Local Church

By Drew Hall

When I was twenty years old a friend of mine at work began talking to me about the Bible. I was a fairly religious person and was a member of a local Baptist church. I regularly attended Sunday School and the morning worship service. My friend and I began "arguing" about what was involved in a person having their sins forgiven and becoming a Christian. Being a Baptist, I contended that baptism was not necessary for salvation and that a person could go to Heaven without ever being baptized. My friend very kindly and forcefully presented the verses in the Bible that prove that baptism is necessary for salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38) and encouraged me to be baptized. After over a month of discussion I could no longer ignore the clear teaching of GOD and I was baptized for the remission of my sins so that my soul could be saved.

After I was saved I began studying with the local preacher of the congregation where my friend (and now myself) worshipped . We had a Bible class every week. We started by studying the book of Acts and then the two letters to the Corinthians. There were many things I needed to learn about. One subject that gave me some problems for several months, maybe over a year, was the subject of whether or not it was right to sing a spiritual song while a piano (or some other mechanical instrument of music) was playing the song's tune. In other words, is it right to use mechanical instruments of music in worship?

While I was a member of the Baptist church we had instrumental music at every worship service. The organ and/or piano would be played for every song we sang and sometimes when we were not singing. Because of my experience with the Baptist church I was prejudiced in favor of the piano or organ. Instrumental music was a part of worship in the Old Testament (Psalm 150), I was used to it, I liked it, it made the singing sound better, and there were no verses in the New Testament that stated that instrumental music in worship was wrong. Because of the above reasons I was not able to teach that it was wrong to use instrumental music in worship.

As my study of the Bible progressed I went beyond merely gathering and understanding the facts and began understanding the principles behind the facts. One principle of Bible study is that those who profess to be Christians should "speak as the oracles of GOD" (1 Peter 4:11). Christians must only teach those things that Jesus Christ teaches in His New Testament. To apply this principle we must read every verse (Matthew 4:4) in the New Testament concerning any subject and then draw the appropriate conclusion based on Jesus' teaching. Another principle that I learned was that Christians must do the right things in the right way. We must worship in "spirit" and in "truth" (John 4:24; 1 Corinthians 14:15). Taking these two principles I learned that I (and everyone else) must only teach and practice those things that Jesus has taught (Colossians 3:17) -- the things we teach and do must be from "the oracles of GOD" and therefore they must be based on truth and not human conjecture or invention. The basic principle GOD has given us is that if something is not taught in HIS covenant with mankind then we must not practice or teach it. This principle is seen in Jesus' life while He was on earth. *(con't next page)*

Times of Services

Sundays - 2:00 pm Bible class, 3:00 pm Assembly Wednesdays - 6:30 pm Bible class

Church Music (continued)

What is one way we know that Jesus ushered in a New Covenant between GOD and men? Hebrews 7:12 tells us that "... the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." We know the law has changed because the priesthood has changed. How do we know the priesthood has changed? Hebrews 12:13-14 states that "... For He (Jesus - dph) of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." We know the priesthood was changed (and hence the change in the law) because Moses (in the Old Law) did not include ("spake nothing concerning") a provision for anyone from the tribe of Judah becoming a priest; and at the time of the writing of the Hebrew letter Jesus was a priest. It would have been against the law of GOD for Jesus to be a priest under the Old Covenant while He lived on earth (Hebrews 8:4) since the Old Covenant was silent (spake neither good nor bad) about a member of the tribe of Judah being a priest. In the same way, GOD has "spake nothing" about having mechanical instruments of music in worship here on earth under Jesus' New Covenant. The New Covenant lesson we learn from Jesus and the Old Covenant priesthood would teach us that if GOD does not mention something (like having mechanical instruments of music in worship) then we cannot practice it. If we would be pleasing to GOD we must stay within "the oracles of GOD" concerning music in worship.

What does GOD's oracles say about singing and music as worship in the New Covenant as we worship GOD here on earth? A list of verses pertaining to this topic follows:

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.

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.

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

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

If we want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ we must sing songs praising and honoring GOD, teaching and being taught by one another as we sing, letting our worship in song express the joy we feel, and letting the music we make be that of the heart. That is Jesus' teaching and that must be our teaching.

Please consider the verses and thoughts we have presented in this lesson. Keep studying the Bible and challenging yourself and others to new heights of spiritual growth. - Drew Hall

Editor's Note: If you would like a Home Bible Study, or would like to study further over the phone, or by computer, please feel free to contact us: Mark J. Ward, 445 Touchstone Parkway, Brunswick, Georgia 31525, (912) 265-6936 - markjward@yahoo.com

Attend the church of GOD's choice,
Not the church of YOUR choice.

Romans 16:16 "...the churches of Christ salute you."

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