

IS IT SCRIPTURAL TO USE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC ?

Int.

1. Aim: To show that the Bible does not authorize instrumental music in our worship today.
2. Eph. 5:19 “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”
3. The issue about instrumental music has long divided the religious world and has caused much discussion.
4. Why do we not use instrumental music? It is not because:
 - a. We don't like it
 - b. We cannot afford it
 - c. We've never had it
5. Some would dismiss the subject as relatively unimportant.
 - a. I suppose Cain thought it was relatively unimportant how he sacrificed, but God thought otherwise - Genesis 4:5; Heb. 11:4
 - b. Nadab and Abihu thought it was relatively unimportant when they offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them (Lev. 10:1). God thought otherwise.
 - c. It is important to worship as God has commanded.
6. We are not opposed to instrumental music in and of itself.
 - a. The issue with us has to do with the worship of the church.
 - b. Many among us are quite gifted in their musical abilities and play a number of instruments.
 - c. Our convictions deal with the nature of New Testament Worship.

7. Many times sincere people have asked me why I think instrumental music is wrong.
 - a. Let me illustrate: I do not think there is anything wrong with T-Bone steak. I enjoy eating it when I can afford to buy it.
 - b. If, however, t-bone steak were placed on the Lord's table together with the bread and the fruit of the vine, or instead, that would be sinful. It is not authorized!
 - c. Instrumental music is not wrong within itself, but its use in worship is wrong because God has not authorized it. T-Bone steak is wrong because it is not authorized in L.S.
8. True worshipers "worship the Father in spirit and truth" - John 4:24
 - a. Only by the word of God can we know how to worship in spirit and truth.
 - b. By faith -- based on the word of God (Rom. 10:17) - I can pray in the spirit. By faith I can sing in the spirit. But where in the New Testament does it say that one can PLAY AN INSTRUMENT IN THE SPIRIT?
9. Is it scriptural to use instrumental music in worship?

Discussion

I. WHEN IS WORSHIP SCRIPTURAL?

- A. Anything is Scriptural for which there is a **direct command**.
 1. The Lord's Supper is Scriptural because Jesus said: "Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24). We have a direct command.
 2. A thing may be Scriptural because it is authorized by an **inspired example**.
 3. We meet on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). A comparison of this passage with other Scriptures indicates that this example was based on apostolic teaching.
- B. We may conclude that a thing is Scriptural if there is a **necessary inference**, if it is authorized indirectly as an essential part of a command or inspired example.

- C. Nowhere in the New Testament is the use of instrumental music in worship commanded.
1. We have no approved example of its use.
 2. There is no necessary inference that it was used.
 3. Most of those who use it today freely admit that it was NOT USED in the New Testament church.

II. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IS NOT AUTHORIZED

- A. We must have Bible authority
- B. God, because He is God, has authority over man.
- C. We must abide by His authority
1. Col. 3:17 "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
 2. 2 John 9 "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."
 3. Heb. 8:5 "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."

III. WHAT ABOUT PSALLO?

- A. There are some who contend that the use of PSALLO in the Greek New Testament makes instrumental music Scriptural.
- B. If PSALLO means to play an instrument why do Greek scholars translate it as 'sing' in our New Testaments? If PSALLO means to play an instrument why did not the churches in New Testament times use an instrument?
- C. The Greek-English lexicon of Henry Thayer defines Greek words - He gives definitions from various periods in the history of the Greek language.
 1. First he defines PSALLO as used by Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.): "to pluck off, pull out...the hair." This is obviously not the meaning in the N.T.
 2. He then defines the word as used by Euripides (480-406 B.C.): "to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang," then as it is used in the later Classical period: "to touch or strike the chord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate, to play on a stringed instrument, to play the harp."
 3. Regarding N.T. usage he says it means: "TO SING A HYMN, TO CELEBRATE THE PRAISES OF GOD IN SONG."
 4. Shall we take the Classical meaning, the meaning in the Septuagint, or the New Testament meaning?
 5. The only definition of PSALLO which fits the context where this word occurs in the New Testament is 'to sing': "and sing to Your name" (Rom. 15:9); "I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding" (1 Cor. 14:15); "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19); "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13).

6. I want to include here a statement made by John W. McGarvey, one of the best Greek scholars of the past generation. Listen to brother McGarvey: "It is manifest that we cannot adopt the practice (referring to instrumental music in worship) without abandoning the obvious and only ground on which a restoration of Primitive Christianity can be accomplished, or on which plea it can be maintained." Let me say I believe this with all my heart. So universal is the scholarship of the world on this point that this illustrious scholar says further: "It is universally admitted by those competent to judge that there is not the slightest indication in the New Testament of divine authority for the use of instrumental music in Christian worship."

D. Singing is all that God has authorized:

1. 1 Cor. 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."
2. Eph. 5:19 "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;"
3. Col. 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."
4. Heb. 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."

IV. GOD'S SILENCE IS NOT AUTHORITY

- A. Two mindsets or ways of looking at this problem:
 - 1. Permissive: We are at liberty to do what is not condemned
 - 2. Prohibitive: Forbidden to act without authority.
- B. Heb. 7:14 - silence of God is prohibitive
 - 1. Moses spake nothing about the tribe of Judah
 - 2. God did not have to say not to use Jam in the L.S. or tell Noah not to use Oak !

V. WHAT ABOUT THE PSALMS?

- A. Some contend that instrumental music is Scriptural because it is mentioned in the Psalms.
 - 1. Those who so contend admit that we are no longer under the law of Moses Gal. 3:24,25
 - 2. But, they claim, the Psalms were not part of the law, and therefore we are authorized to use the instruments they mention.
- B. If this be true then we, as Christians, are free to do ALL things mentioned in the Psalms.
 - 1. David said: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean" (Psalm 51:7).
 - 2. Is the use of hyssop Scriptural under the New Covenant?
- C. And what about the following?
 - 1. "Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment - this honour have all His saints" (Psalm 149:5-9).

2. Does this Psalm authorize Christians to execute vengeance with the sword?
 3. Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world.
 4. If it had been, His servants would fight (John 18:36).
 5. He also warned Peter: "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52).
 6. In Revelation this warning is repeated: "He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword" (Rev. 13:10).
- D. No, the Psalms were written under the Old Covenant and contain many things which are not applicable to Christians.
- E. Jesus quotes from the Psalms as part of the law.
1. "Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, 'I said, 'Ye are gods' "'?" (John 10:34). This quotation is from Psalms 82:6.
 2. "But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause' " (John 15:25). This quotation is from Psalms 35:19. The Psalms are part of the law.
- F. May Christians worship according to the law of Moses? "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6).

VI. IS SINGING REQUIRED?

- A. Some have claimed that the whole thing is a matter of option, even whether we sing or not.
- B. According to some, instruments may accompany the singing since singing is not necessary anyway.
- C. Let us look carefully at this.
1. Jesus said true worship must be 'in spirit' (John 4:23,24).
 2. Paul said: "I will sing with the spirit" (1 Cor. 14:15).
 3. How can singing be optional? We are commanded to sing both to one another and to the Lord: "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18,19);
 4. "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" (Col. 3:16).
- D. Nor can one maintain that the use of an instrument is a matter of indifference.
1. Jesus said: "In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).
 2. How did the use of instrumental music get into the worship?
 3. It is not found in the New Testament.
 4. It was BROUGHT IN and it was TAUGHT IN by MEN.
 5. Jesus said - and I believe it - that such worship is VAIN.

E. It is not authorized, God has specified singing and it is an addition to God's Word !

1. Deut. 4:2
2. Prov. 30:5-7
3. Rev. 22:18-19

F. If one why not the other ?

1. If we could have instrumental music then we could also have peanut butter and jelly on the Lord's Supper
2. Excuses or justifications made by men
 - a. I Like it
 - b. Just as aid
 - c. It helps the singing / Lord's Supper
 - d. God didn't say not to
3. But we cannot do either, because they are not authorized

Conclusion

1. Instrumental music should be opposed by those who respect the authority of God's word
2. It is not authorized in the New Testament !
3. To use such in our worship would make it vain and sinful. We would be going beyond what is revealed in the N.T. and that means we do not have God's approval.
4. John 4:23
5. There is a way that is right ! That is to worship God by singing and making melody in our hearts to worship God.
6. Let us always do all that God says and only what God says !!

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