

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Handout for Lesson 8 of *Thought Provoking Questions*

THE REAL ISSUE: THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

- #1) Personal predilection is not the standard.
- #2) Human reasoning is not the standard.
- #3) My position or opinion is not the standard.
- #4) Scriptures to consider:
 - (a) Leviticus 10:1-2
 - (b) Numbers 20:12
 - (c) Deuteronomy 32:49-52
 - (d) John 12:48-50

HAS GOD AUTHORIZED A PARTICULAR TYPE OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP?

- #1) There must be agreement on the source of authority governing the answer.
- #2) Does the practice of the early church have any bearing on the issue?
- #3) If the Bible is the standard, where in the Bible does it say not to use mechanical instruments of music in worship?
 - a) Generic commands.
 - b) Specific commands.

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT MUSIC IN WORSHIP?

- #1) Two primary (not sole) passages:
 - a) Ephesians 5:18-21
 - b) Colossians 3:16
- #2) Both refer to a specific type of music.
 - a) Language (*acapella*, meaning “as in the chapel”) supports this conclusion.
 - b) Church history through the Reformation supports this conclusion as evidenced by quotes from many of the reformers and early preachers:
 - Martin Luther** rejected the organ as an “ensign of Baal.”
 - John Calvin** said of the organ in worship (things had not yet reached the orchestra stage), “It is no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of tapers or revival of the other shadows of the law. The Roman Catholics borrowed it from the Jews.”
 - John Wesley**, when asked about the use of the organ in worship, brusquely replied, “I have no objection to the organ in our chapels provided it is neither seen nor heard.”
 - Adam Clarke**, a great Methodist commentator and a contemporary of John Wesley, said,

“I am an old man and an old minister, and I here declare that I have never known instrumental music to be productive of any good in the worship of God, and have reason to believe that it has been productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire, but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and I here register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of that Infinite Spirit who requires His followers to worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

Charles Spurgeon was perhaps the greatest Baptist preacher who ever lived. He preached for twenty years in the Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle of London, England to 10,000 people every Sunday. The mechanical instrument never entered the tabernacle of Spurgeon. When asked why he did not use the organ in worship, he cited 1 Cor. 14:15: “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.” He added, “I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery.”

ATTEMPTS TO JUSTIFY THE USE OF MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS IN WORSHIP

- #1) Some argue that Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 have nothing to do with worship.
 - a) However, among the issues discussed by Paul is the matter of that with which the Christian is to be filled – the Holy Spirit.
 - b) Being filled with the Spirit affects all areas of the Christian’s life.
 - 1) Worship – speaking and singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.
 - 2) Grateful attitude toward God for his goodness – giving thanks always.
 - 3) Our attitude toward one another – submitting to one another in the fear of God.
 - c) If the first of these is not to be fulfilled in the worship service, where is it to be fulfilled?
- #2) Some argue that mechanical instruments (harps of God) will be in Heaven.
 - a) What is a “harp of God”?
 - b) If this is a valid basis for what we are to do in worship, to what all does it apply?
 - c) When the Bible states what they were doing in Heaven, as opposed to that like which it sounded, what does it say?
 - d) Those in heaven are not a church of Christ on the earth during the Christian dispensation.

#3) Some argue that God approved the used of mechanical instruments for worship in the Old Testament.

a) This attempted justification for instruments of music in the worship of the church is just the opposite of the attempted justification based on Heaven – one looks forward and the other looks backward. “Cafeteria” Old Testament selection (picking only that which appeals to you) is no justification at all. On what basis is the use of instruments pulled forward while animal sacrifice, burning of incense, and going to Jerusalem are left behind?

b) Additionally, the Prophet Amos tells what God thought of such even in the Old Testament.

Amos 6:5 “That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David.”

As in divorce, God suffered some things among those who did not have the Light of Christ.

MUST THE SONGS THAT WE SING BE SCRIPTURAL?

- #1) We may not always agree on whether a song is scriptural, but we should not just assume that songs are Biblical when many, if not most, are written by denominationalists.
 - a) Indeed, many of the modern songs must be reviewed carefully because much “loose language” has slipped into our vocabulary, especially with regard to the work of the Holy Spirit (the subject of one of our classes).
 - b) No disagreement can be resolved without a clear statement of its basis; no disagreement can be resolved with rancor. That said, it is not likely that all disagreements will ever be resolved. Now to the songs.
- #2) Examples of unscriptural songs.
 - a) **Just A Little Talk With Jesus:** This song involves prayer to Jesus rather than to God in Jesus’ name. It implies that salvation is through the sinner’s prayer.
 - b) **He Lives:** This song is based on neo-orthodox doctrine that Jesus lives only in the believer’s heart. There was no actual, factual, literal physical resurrection from the dead.
 - c) **Shine, Jesus, Shine:** This hymn asks Jesus to send for His word when he has already done so in the Great Commission. Will he be pleased when we ask Him to do what He has commanded us to do and relies on us to do?

For other examples, see the website given at the bottom of this page.