

Strange Things You Hear About the Church of Christ (#4 of 12)

“You Don’t Believe In Instruments of Music”

Examining Objections

Text: John 4:23-24

Introduction:

1. In our lesson this morning we looked to the clear teaching of what the Lord said in the New Testament regarding music in worship.
2. Tonight we begin examining some of the arguments offered in defense of using mechanical instruments in worship.

Discussion:

I. Objection #1 – They Are Used in the Old Testament (And Even King David Used Them)

1. If we accept the argument of using an item of Old Testament worship, on the same basis we could bring in:
 - (1) Dancing - Psalm 150:3-4
 - (2) Animal sacrifices - Leviticus, etc.
 - (3) Burning of incense - Exodus 30:1
2. Is it acceptable to pick out of Jewish worship just what we want, leaving the rest (See Galatians 5:3-4 – which would also include such things as dietary laws, and such!)?
3. Using David as an example also leads to some additional problems
 - (1) What are we to do with his multiple wives and other transgressions in his life? (It is clear he is not to be our example! - cf. 1 Peter 2:21)
 - (2) An argument can be made that David not only worshiped with mechanical instruments, but that he (some 400 years after the giving of the Law at Sinai) was the one who introduced them (2 Chronicles 29:25) and that a woe was pronounced upon the practice of such (Amos 6:5).
4. One matter often overlooked as people point out the frequency of the mention of mechanical music in praise of God in the Old Testament, contrasted with the total absence of instrumental music in the New Testament.
5. The most important thing though, is what we learned in our first lesson of this series – our standard must be the New Testament, not the old (cf. Colossians 2:14; Galatians 5:4).

II. Objection #2 – Paul Commanded Them in Ephesians 5:19

1. This argument is also known as the “PSALLO” argument, since it hinges on the use of that Greek word in the passage. The claim is made that the word PSALLO means to pluck or twang a stringed instrument, thus Paul is

teaching the accompaniment of singing with a mechanical instrument.

2. Some things to consider if this argument is valid:
 - (1) This passage is a command. If PSALLO is teaching the accompaniment of mechanical instruments, mechanical music would not be an option but a requirement.
 - (2) If the definition of the word is proper, not only **must** I play a mechanical instrument to worship God, but I **must play a stringed instrument which I pluck or twang.**

Of course those who make the argument do not teach such. (It is easy to make an argument if you disregard the consequences of the argument and determine to have it your way all the way (cf. Matthew 15:9).

3. What then is the truth of this passage?
 - (1) PSALLO does not necessarily mean "sing with musical accompaniment." Psallo conveys the action of twitching or twanging, but the instrument intended to be touched is specified. (cf. 1 Samuel 16:16 - "player" in the LXX is from PSALLO)
 - (2) Likewise in Ephesians 5: 19 the instrument to be touched is specified. The stated instrument is the human heart, "...making melody in your heart to the Lord."
4. Note the following chart regarding the Scriptural purposes of music in worship:

| The Bible | The Commands: | The Voice | An Instrument |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| | Speak in song (Eph 5:19) | Can | Cannot |
| | Teach (Col 3:16) | Can | Cannot |
| | Admonish (Col 3:16) | Can | Cannot |
| | Sing with spirit (1 Cor 14:15) | Can | Cannot |
| | Sing with understanding (1 Cor 14:15) | Can | Cannot |
| | Praise God (Heb 2:12) | Can | Cannot |
| | Make melody in the heart (Eph 5:19) | Can | Cannot |

The human voice is capable of doing everything which God commands us to do as music in worship. A mechanical instrument cannot do anything required by God in worship with music (except make melody, and it does not do that in the heart as God commands).

Conclusion:

William Woodson rightly stated,

It is crucially important to observe that although instrumental music of various types was readily available in contemporary society, no passage shows that the churches mentioned in the New Testament ever used instrumental music in worship. Did they not understand the true meaning of the Old Testament, particularly Psalms? Did they not understand the meaning of various words, such as psallo, etc., so often discussed pro and con in contemporary debates? Did they not know the Jewish practices, both in the temple and in the synagogues? Did they not know the mind of God? Most certainly, on all these questions and much more. Yet, there is not even a hint of the use of instrumental music in the worship of these churches.

These facts of New Testament history stand as a stone barricade against any attempted justification of the use of instrumental music in worship today. If present appeals to the Old Testament, i.e., psallo, the temple or synagogue practice, etc., legitimately warrant such use, why did the apostles and brethren in the first century not so understand and incorporate instrumental music into the worship of these churches? Such facts are not lightly to be dismissed or forgotten. ("History of Music in Worship," in *The Christian Courier*, June, 2006)