

Music in Worship

When people visit churches of Christ for the first time, they are often surprised to hear only singing. There are no instruments of music such as pianos, organs, drums, or guitars. Neither do they hear choirs, quartets or solos. Every member of the congregation is encouraged to join in the singing. Why are churches of Christ different from most churches in the kind of music they have?

Churches of Christ follow only the Word of God (Isaiah 8:20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). They understand that we must have authority in the Word of God for everything we do in the work and worship of the church (Colossians 3:17). We must not add to the teachings found in God's Word. We must not leave out anything God has taught (2 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19). The Old Testament was God's law for the nation of Israel to prepare them for the coming of Christ (Galatians 3:23-25). The New Testament is God's law for all people today (Hebrews 7:12; 8:6-13). Therefore, we must worship God today according to the teaching of the New Testament. We must practice only that which is authorized in the New Testament!

The only kind of music authorized by the New Testament is singing. Please note the words of the inspired writers of the New Testament: *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:18-19). *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God. And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"* (Colossians 3:16-17). *"Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name"* (Hebrews 13:15).

Please note that these verses mention an instrument. It is not an instrument made by man, but one made by God. We are commanded to sing. This is the *"fruit of our lips."* Our singing must be accompanied by our hearts. We are commanded to sing and make melody in the heart. We must sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. The only instrument authorized in worship is one's heart!

The New Testament tells us how God wants us to worship Him today (John

4:24). However, it says nothing about using instruments of music made by the hands of men. Therefore, if we use such instruments, we are guilty of adding to God's Word (Revelation 22:18-19). This is a sin!

According to historians, the church did not use instruments of music for several hundred years after the time of the apostles. In fact, the first known instrument of music to be brought into the church was one which the emperor of France gave to Pope Vitalian of the Roman Catholic Church in the seventh century. This was several hundred years after the New Testament was written.

Please note too the expressions *"speaking to yourselves,"* and *"teaching and admonishing one another."* These statements show reciprocal action. This is action that we do to one another at the same time. It means that each member of the congregation joins in the singing. By doing so, he teaches and encourages his fellow Christians. At the same time, they are teaching and encouraging him by their singing. This shows that every Christian must participate in the singing as best he can. There is no authority in the New Testament for only one person to sing, or even a group to sing to the rest of

the congregation. God's will is that every Christian should sing and by doing this teach and encourage every other Christian. Special singing groups are an unauthorized addition to the pattern of worship given in the New Testament. Therefore, those who use them are sinning.

If we simply follow that which God has revealed in the New Testament for His church, we will praise Him with our voices. The whole congregation will join in this praise. No other kind of music is commanded. If we add mechanical instruments or special singing groups, we are not abiding in the teaching of Christ (2 John 9). We have added to that which God has authorized (Revelation 22:18-19). This makes our worship worthless to God for we are following the doctrines and commandments of men (Matthew 15:9).

Jesus said, "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24). We must follow the pattern of worship God has given in the New Testament in order to worship in truth (John 17:17). Choirs, solos, and mechanical instruments are not according to the truth!



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