**INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP**

There is no doubt that Jews under the Old Testament used instruments of music in worship. In fact, the use of such was *commanded*by God (see 2Chr.29:25). *It is significant, however, that such was never commanded in the New Testament!* Quite simply, this means that instrumental music in worship is not authorized for Christians today (Col.3:17; 2Jn.9).

Many times, in an effort to justify the use of instrumental music in worship, an appeal is made to Jewish worship under the Old Testament. Such an appeal fails to consider the fact that God now has a NEW Testament, which has superseded the Old one (2Cor.3:5-14; Hb.8:7-13). It is a serious transgression to bind the Old Testament Law on people today (Ac.15:1-29; Ga.5:1-4). We must follow ONLY the New Testament will of Jesus (Col.2:6-10).

There are ten passages in the New Testament which address the issue of music in worship. Each one of them *specifies* singing, with *no reference* to instruments of music (Mt.26:30; Mk.14:26; Ac.16: 25; Rm.15:9; 1Cor.14:15; Ep.5:19; Col.3:16; Hb.2:12; 13:15; and Jm.5:13). *This simply means that instruments of music are not authorized for New Testament worship.* To illustrate, suppose you were to go to a restaurant, and order a hamburger, fries and coke. That is all you expect to receive, and all you expect to pay for. The waiter or waitress has no right to bring a fish sandwich, and charge you for it. You did not order that! Likewise, God did not "order" instrumental music in New Testament worship. We have no right to "serve" it to Him, nor "charge" Him for it (i.e. expect Him to approve and/or reward us for doing His will).

Another attempt to justify the use of instrumental music in worship is to appeal to the word "psalm," or its various forms, as used in the New Testament. It is true that *at one time,* these words suggested the use of instrumental music. However, careful study shows that by the time the New Testament was written, these words had changed meaning. W.E. Vine, in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, summarizes this change very well. He said that the Greek word, "psallo," originally meant "primarily to twitch, twang, then, to play a stringed instrument with the fingers, and hence, in the Sept., to sing with the harp, sing psalms, ***denotes, in the N.T., to SING a hymn, SING praise"*** (all emphasis mine, ls). You will find very much the same conclusion in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon. Further, every scholarly translation, such as the King James, New King James, American Standard, New American Standard, etc. all translate the Greek word "psallo" as "sing" – or, in Ep.5:19, "making melody" (note: "in your heart"). Incidentally, the reason for the difference in Ephesians 5:19 is due to the *figurative* use of the word there. One does NOT literally “sing” with the heart. The idea being conveyed by the phrase, “making melody in your heart,” is that our singing must be “from the heart” – i.e., from *a sincere and genuine motivation* to worship God. Simply “going through the motions” of singing is not enough to please God! The bottom line is that one must ignore a great deal of scholarship in order to force the conclusion that instrumental music is inherent in the word "psallo." If one isn't careful, he may end up looking foolish!

Further, IF instrumental music in inherent in these words, then it would mean that instrumental music is *demanded* of us – there could be no option! Not only so, but it would be demanded *of each one of us,* for the Bible says that every Christian is to "sing psalms" (Ep.5:19; Jm.5:13). That would mean that no one could play an instrument for another; each must do it for himself. Yet, I know of no one who really believes or practices that – do you?

Finally, the New Testament itself explains what we are to do with the psalms. It says, "***speaking*** to one another in psalms... ***singing*** and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ep.5:19). And that, friends, settles the matter for all Bible believers! There's no passage in the New Testament which allows instrumental music in worship. Let us be content to worship God in His appointed way (Jn.4:24). Remember what Jesus said: "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. *And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men"* (Mt.15:8-9).

--Lanny Smith