

Mechanical Instruments & Contemporary Christian Music

(Co 3:17)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Evening,
 - a. Greetings...
 2. When it comes to any issue in the church there are a few things we must keep in mind.
 - a. First we must remember we are required have authority for everything we do i.e. God has to authorize everything we do.
 - i. **Co 3:17**
 - b. Second we must keep in mind that God has given us everything we need to live a righteous and godly life through His Word.
 - i. **II Pt 1:3**
 - c. Third we must never loose site that we can all come to the knowledge of truth which is singular i.e. it has a single interpretation.
 - i. **Jn 8:32; Jn 17:17; I Co 1:10**
 3. When it comes to the issue mechanical instruments there has been little that has garnered more debate over the years.
 - a. It was the mechanical instrument that split the church in the early 20th century.
 - b. It is the mechanical instrument that is currently infiltrating many congregations today and is a catalyst for all sorts of other derogation in worship.
 4. However there is a relatively new problem that has risen over the last 20 years or so that has led to the increase in acceptance of mechanical instruments in modern times.
 - a. This “new problem” is commonly described as contemporary Christian music.
 - i. Contemporary Christian music is psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs sang on the radio or other devices that have mechanical instruments accompanying them but are said to be purely for entertainment purposes “in the church.”
 1. It should be noted the denominational world that creates these songs consider them worship songs hence the “in the church” above.
 5. Tonight we will be studying both mechanical instruments in worship, and the issue of contemporary Christian music.
- I. Justifications For The Use Of Mechanical Instruments**
- A. The Bible doesn't say I can't use them argument
 1. This is by far not a “new argument” but one that has been around for years.
 - i. Tertullian of the 2nd & 3rd century wrote about those that contented that “the thing which is not forbidden is freely permitted.”¹
 - ii. Martin Luther wrote, “What is not against Scripture is for Scripture, and Scripture for it.”²
 - iii. One man wrote, “The Bible is silent on the fact that silence is prohibitive; therefore this “silence hermeneutic” is self-refuting.”³

¹ The Chaplet: Chapter 2 <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0304.htm>

² The Silence of the Scriptures: Permissive or Prohibitive by Jackson, Wayne <https://goo.gl/itjlbJ>

³ The Church of Christ and Musical Instruments <http://goo.gl/gtoHrz>

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2. Is this man right concerning the Bible being silent on silence being prohibitive?
 - a. Many think this man is right but that statement is a statement based on ignorance of the Scriptures and is a fairytale not a reality. The proof text for silence being prohibitive is (**He 7:13-14**)
 1. Notice God was silent on Judah being priests.
 2. This silence prohibited Judah from being priests.
 3. Thus Jesus from the tribe of Judah could not be a High Priest on earth but rather had to be one in heaven.
 - ii. Also it doesn't take much research to see how God handles those that ignored His silence.
 - a. Nadab & Abihu were killed by God for using a different fire than what God had asked for (**Lv 10:1-2**). However God never told them they couldn't use a different fire.
 - b. Uzza was killed by God for transporting the ark in an improper way (**I Ch 13:7-10; 15:12-13**). However God never said the Ark of the Covenant couldn't be transported by cart.
 3. Brothers and sisters silence as a prohibition is simply common sense even in our secular society.
 - i. If I ask to borrow my neighbor's lawnmower and take his car too do you think the judge will accept my defense of "he didn't say I couldn't?"
- B. The word "psallo" means to pluck a mechanical instrument argument
1. This argument stems from the Greek word translated "make melody" in Paul's letter to the Ephesians (**Ep 5:19**). It's no wonder when one takes a glance at the many different lexicons.
 - i. "to twitch or twang, i.e. to play on a stringed instrument (celebrate the divine worship with music and accompanying odes):—make melody, sing (psalms)."⁴
 - ii. "to play on a stringed instrument...to sing to somebody with the accompaniment (of a harp)...to sing with (the accompaniment of a harp)...to sing to somebody with the accompaniment of a harp...to praise..."⁵
 - iii. "primarily 'to twitch, twang,' then, 'to play a stringed instrument with the fingers,' and hence, in the Sept., 'to sing with a harp, sing psalms,'..."⁶
 - a. As one can see at first glance it appears that this word is necessarily tied to the accompaniment of instruments that can be plucked.

⁴ Strong, J. (2009). *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 78). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁵ Lust, Johan, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint : Revised Edition*. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: Stuttgart, 2003.

⁶ Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996.

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2. Does this argument hold up to scrutiny in the Bible?
 - i. First let us look closer at some lexicons as they continue to the word “psallo” in the N.T.
 - a. “denotes, in the NT, ‘to sing a hymn, sing praise’; in Eph. 5:19, ‘making melody’ ”⁷
 - b. “sing, sing praise”⁸
 - c. “Although the NT does not voice opposition to instrumental music, in view of Christian resistance to mystery cults, as well as Pharisaic aversion to musical instruments in worship (s. EWerner, art. ‘Music’, IDB 3, 466–69), it is likely that some such sense as make melody is best understood in this Eph pass. Those who favor ‘play’ (e.g. L-S-JM; ASouter, Pocket Lexicon, 1920; JMoffatt, transl. 1913) may be relying too much on the earliest mng. of ψάλλω. ψ. τῷ πνεύματι and in contrast to that ψ. τῷ νοῦ sing praise in spiritual ecstasy and in full possession of one’s mental faculties 1 Cor 14:15.”⁹
 - ii. Second keep in mind the instrument by that God expects to be plucked is “the heart”
 - a. Even if the term psallo had not changed definition by N.T. times it would not matter because God authorized only one instrument...the heart.

1. **Ep 5:19** “making melody...with your heart”

- C. The Psalms were meant to be sung with mechanical instruments argument
 1. Once again we see an appeal to “some” lexicons on this.
 - i. “a set piece of music, i.e. a sacred ode (accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument)”¹⁰
 - ii. “psalmós means “plucking,” then “playing” (a stringed instrument).”¹¹
 2. We also see an appeal to the psalms themselves and the obvious use of mechanical instruments.
 - i. In Psalm 150 we have no less than 8 instruments mentioned that were to be used to “praise the LORD.”
 3. Like before the lexicon argument is limited. One simply has to continue with most of the lexicons to see this.
 - i. “In Eph. 5:19 praise is addressed to the Lord with God’s saving work again as the theme. Emphasis is given in v. 19 by the verbs “singing and making melody” (cf. Ps. 27:6). **psállontes does not now denote literally playing on a stringed instrument**, and the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs hardly refer to different kinds of texts.”¹²

⁷ Ibid

⁸ *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Logos Bible Software, 2011.

⁹ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

¹⁰ Strong, J. (2009). *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 78). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

¹¹ Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 1225). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

¹² Ibid (emphasis mine)

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4. What about the fact that the psalms used instruments.
 - i. God has always authorized that which He expects us to follow and that means He always gives us a pattern to follow.
 - a. **Co 3:17; II Ti 1:13**
 - ii. There is no doubt that God commanded and expect the Israelites to use mechanical instruments in their worship.
 - a. **II Ch 29:25; Nu 10:10; Ps 150**
 - iii. Under the Law of Christ however, which everyone now is under (**Ro 7:1-7**), God has been silent on the issue of mechanical instruments in worship.
 - a. We already discussed how silence prohibits.
 1. **He 7:14**
 - iv. If God gave the pattern for mechanical instruments in the O.T. and God is a God of patterns why would He leave the pattern out in the N.T.?
 - a. Simple because He does not want them and thus has not authorized them.

II. Justification For Contemporary Christian Music

- A. This is an issue that has caused much controversy over the years
 1. There have been very sound brethren on both sides of the issue.
 - i. This does not mean it is something we cannot know, as we can know what God expects from us in life and godliness on this issue and every other issue.
 - a. **II Pt 1:3; Jn 8:32**
 2. We will look at the two most common justifications for their usage.
- B. These songs are better than anything else on the radio argument
 1. I'm constantly amazed at how many members of the Lord's church use such ignorant defenses to try and justify that which they are doing.
 - i. If people truly believed this they would have to...
 - a. Only watch "Christendom" preaching on TV instead of anything else.
 - b. Only shop at places that have "Christendom" backgrounds like Hobby Lobby instead of places like Walmart.
 - c. Only associate themselves with people that say they are Christians and no one else.
 - ii. It does not take long to see the absurdity & ignorance in this argument and its lack of common sense.
 - a. There are plenty of non-sinful entertainments in the world that do not violate God's pattern for worship.
- C. These songs are for entertainment purposes only argument
 1. Here is an argument that has some actual teeth to it but only under very limited circumstances.
 - i. "...the core issue is whether listening to someone else sing songs that can be used in the worship of God constitutes worship or not."¹³

¹³ La Vista church of Christ Questions and Answers <http://goo.gl/lm2tkU>

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2. Can someone listen to songs that are used to worship God and not be worshipping?
 - i. The answer is yes, absolutely.
 - a. There is no indication that the prisoners that were listening to Paul and Silas singing were violating God's Word.
 1. **Ac 16:25**
 - ii. We find God authorized individual singing as well without the collective (**Ja 5:13**).
 - a. This cannot be during the worship assembly as individual outbursts of song during the assembly worship would violate other passages.
 1. **I Co 14:33, 40**
 - iii. Also if this was not true then every time a member of the Lord's church heard someone singing a worship song they would have to participate so as not to be violating Scripture.
 - a. **Ep 5:19; Co 3:16**
3. Can someone sing along to songs that are used to worship God and not be worshipping?
 - i. No one can sing a song, hymn, or spiritual song without worshipping.
 - a. Can someone talk with God today without praying?
 - b. Can someone drink grape juice and eat unleavened bread while thinking of the gospel without partaking of the Lord's Supper?
 1. Of course they can't.
 - ii. Am I saying everything we do is worship?
 - a. NO!!!
 1. When we drive down the road, mow our lawn, or do anything that has no worship criteria we are not worshipping.
 - b. HOWEVER!!!
 1. When we move our mind and/or actions to the realm of worship we start worshipping.
 2. The question is only if we are doing so scripturally or not.
4. With all this in mind can one listen to contemporary Christian music for entertainment purposes only?
 - i. The dangers of doing so far out way the benefits of listening to them.
 - a. First the likelihood that someone will continually listen to this music and not sing along at some point is slim to none.
 - b. Second when one grows up listening to this music they will have a harder time separating entertainment from worship and it can and has led to an acceptance of this type of music in the worship services.
 - ii. There is an old saying "There is a way we are guaranteed to by right...stay there."
 - a. Why would anyone want to put themselves in an area that they cannot be certain it will not keep them out of heaven?

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CONCLUSION

1. Ladies & gentle let me be clear.
 - a. Mechanical instruments are not authorized under the Law of Christ which we all are under (**Ro 7:1-7; Co 2:14; I Co 9:21**).
 - i. As such it is beyond foolish to incorporate them into any psalm, hymn, or spiritual song no matter what the setting.
2. Question: Are you willing to do what it takes to “know you are living a righteous and godly life?”