

TRUTH FOR THE WORLD
Bible Question and Answer Booklet

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

QUESTION: Is it a sin to use and/or sing to the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music in worship services?

ANSWER: Yes! It is sin to do so because there is no scripture in the New Testament that authorizes the use of mechanical instruments in worship to God! In Colossians 3:16, we are told that whatever we do in word (which would include singing) or deed (which would include playing and singing), it must be done in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus. Clearly, from Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16 and I Corinthians 14:15, we see that music authorized by the New Testament is vocal and congregational! We cannot, without sinning, take away from God's Word (Revelation 22:18). We cannot, without sinning, add to God's Word (Revelation 22:19). We cannot change His Word in any way (Galatians 1:6-9)! Neither can we go to the Old Testament to learn how we are to worship under the New Testament. This is true, because the Old Testament was taken out of the way at the cross of Christ. Please read carefully the following passages: II Corinthians 3; Galatians 3:16-29; Ephesians 2:13-19; Colossians 2:13-14; Hebrews 7:12; Hebrews 8:7.

Mechanical instruments of music were first introduced into worship services in the eighth century, almost eight hundred years after the establishment of the church of Christ in 30-33AD. In fact, they have only become widely accepted in the last one hundred fifty years as religious groups moved progressively away from the purity of the Gospel. Clearly then, it is certain that the use of instruments was not included in the apostles' doctrine (teaching). We have been admonished to continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42)! Would one be continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine if he or she did something not included in their doctrine? Obviously not! Would he or she be violating God's Word? Surely!

QUESTION: May Christians today look to the Old Testament for authorization to use instruments of music in worship to God?

ANSWER: No! Those who have lived, are living, and will live from the cross of Christ until the end of time are to be judged only by the New Testament of Jesus Christ (John 12:48).

The Old Testament has been taken out of the way and replaced by the New Testament. Please read carefully the following passages: Romans 7:4-7; II Corinthians 3:13-14; Galatians 3:24-25; Ephesians 2:13-16; Hebrews 7:12; 8:7. In Colossians 2:14, we see that the handwriting of ordinances (Old Testament) was blotted out; that it was against us; that it was contrary to us. Therefore, He took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross! Because of this, Christians cannot look to the Old Testament for authority to offer animal sacrifices, burn incense or worship with mechanical instruments. More important, there is no authority in the

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New Testament for us to engage in any such acts today. To do so is to sin and fall from grace (Galatians 5:4).

The New Testament, by which we will be judged, authorizes only congregational, vocal music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16-17).

QUESTION: Does the use of instruments of music by David before King Saul justify the use of instruments in worship services today?

ANSWER: No! A careful study of Romans 7:1-7 reveals that if one attempts to live under the Old Law and the New Law at the same time it is equal to a person having two marriage partners at the same time. Paul says in Romans 7:3, that such a person is committing adultery! The person with two marriage partners is guilty of physical adultery, while the person who attempts to live by the Old Law and the New Law together is guilty of spiritual adultery. Both are sins that will cause one to be lost! In fact, Paul states very clearly that when one tries to be justified by the Old Law, that individual has "fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). In verse four of Romans seven, Paul says, we "are become dead to the law" and that we "should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead." In verse five, we are told that "we are delivered from the law" and should serve it no more. In verse seven, we are clearly told what law we are dead to, and delivered from, i.e., the law that said, "thou shalt not covet." In other words we are dead to, and delivered from, the Old Testament law. Since this is true, we may not go to the Old Testament to learn how to worship God today. We are under the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Under it alone (lest we be guilty of spiritual adultery) we must learn to live and worship, because by it alone we will one day be judged (John 12:48).

There is no authority in the New Testament of Jesus Christ for the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship. Similarly, there is no authorization in the New Testament for the use of choirs, quartets, trios, duets, solos, dramatic presentations, hand clapping, shouting, dancing, and suchlike! The music that our God authorizes in His Word is simply vocal and congregational. We have not the authority to add to it, nor to take away from it (Revelation 22:18-19)!

QUESTION: Is it right to use instruments of music for weddings in the church building?

ANSWER: It is wrong for the simple reason that it teaches those who (in error) perceive the "meeting house" to be the "church" that it is okay to use mechanical instruments in worship to God. Since both worship and weddings occur in the place of worship, they often hold that if the instrument can be used in the wedding, (often in accompaniment of hymns, which is as well sinful - Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) it can, likewise, be used in the worship service. Indeed, they (because of their misperception) see the inconsistency in what the church sometimes practices. Not only sinful practices, but anything that could

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detrimentally affect the destiny of a soul needs to be avoided, whatever the cost (Matthew 18:6).

QUESTION: Can we justify the use of instruments in worship on the basis that God created the materials of which they are made?

ANSWER: No! On the same basis one could argue for, and justify, the use of animal sacrifices in worship, since, clearly, God created animals! As well, one could argue that since God made fruits and grain from which alcohol comes, we could, therefore, justifiably become drunken in worship to God! Further, since God created "all" of the elements from which "all" things are made, we could, based on the theory proposed, use any or "all" things in existence in worship to God in any way we might so elect. Surely, such confusion was not in the purpose of God (I Corinthians 14:33)! Neither was it left up to man how he would worship (John 4:24)!

QUESTION: What is the difference between instruments and human beings? Both are His creation.

ANSWER: The difference is that human beings can worship! Instruments cannot! Neither can they satisfy the purpose of God in the music that He has authorized. In Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, we learn that God-approved music in worship demands "singing," "making melody in our hearts," "speaking," teaching one another," and "admonishing one another." The instrument does not and cannot answer to, or fulfill, the demands of music in Christian worship! Only human beings in compliance with His will can satisfy these scriptural requirements!

QUESTION: Could it be that the reason for not using instruments in the early church was that they were not available?

ANSWER: No! They were available in New Testament times, as well as in Old Testament times. Please read Psalms 150! The reason they could not be use in New Testament times (including today) is supplied in the answers to the above questions.

QUESTION: Where in God's word did He command us not to use instruments in worship?

ANSWER: Since people today are bound only by the New Testament, the question would more appropriately be, "Where in the New Testament did God command us not to use instruments in worship?" Even more appropriately the question should be, "Where in the New Testament did God begin or start (authorize) the use of instruments in worship?" The answer is: He didn't! Certainly those who add the instrument are adding to God's Word in defiance of Revelation 22:18. These are guilty of presumptuous sin (Psalms 19:13)!

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Another answer to this question could rightly be: He commanded us not to use instruments in the same place He commanded us not to use animal sacrifices, incense burning, the lighting of lamps, etc.

The reason that there is so much confusion in the religious world today is that men have come to believe that if God did not specifically say "you can't do it," it is okay to go ahead and do it! This thinking is foreign to the Bible! When God specifically tells us how to do something, everything else is automatically excluded. One example is: God specified that Noah's ark was to be built out of "gopher wood" (Genesis 6:14). Noah did exactly what God had commanded him to do (Genesis 6:22) and thereby pleased God and became an "heir of righteousness" (Hebrews 11:7). When God commanded Noah to use "gopher" wood, He automatically excluded all other woods, such as, oak, pine, cherry, birch, etc. God was not obligated to say, "don't use oak," "don't use pine," "don't use cherry," etc. Noah understood that he could not use a replacement wood or a multiplicity of woods without sinning, i.e., transgressing God's commandment (I John 3:4). The same principle remains valid today! There are two kinds of music, i.e., vocal and instrumental. God said we are to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; I Corinthians 14:15). When God commanded "sing," He automatically excluded the playing of instruments, just as in the case of Noah's ark. When God commanded fruit of the vine and unleavened bread to be used during the Lord's Supper, He automatically excluded all other drinks and food on His table! If the argument is valid (and it isn't) that one can use the instrument because God did not specifically command us not to use it, the same argument could be rightly be used to place a "Big Mac" on the Lord's Table, because surely God did not command us not to use a "Big Mac." In fact, in worship services, we could do anything we wanted to do under this argument and call it "worship." We could dance, swim, sacrifice animals, sleep, talk to our neighbor, watch a hand-held television, etc. Surely, God did not command us not to do these things! All who would worship God need to realize that we are only permitted to do what He authorizes us in scripture to do! All else is in violation of His authorization and is, therefore, sinful!

If people could understand this vital biblical principle, it would go a long way in answering the Lord's prayer for unity among believers (John 17:20-23).

QUESTION: In Matthew 16:19, Jesus promised Peter that whatsoever he would bind on earth would also be bound in heaven and whatsoever he would loose on earth would also be loosed in heaven. Can we not do the same today and thereby authorize the use of instruments in worship to God? It should be proper if 'whatsoever we do, we do it all in His name' (Colossians 3:17).

ANSWER: This same promise was also made to the other apostles (Matthew 18:18). But we must understand that this promise was tied into the promise that the apostles would be given the Holy Spirit who would "teach them all things" (John 14:26) and guide them "into all truth" (John 16:13). The "binding" and the

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“loosing” that the inspired apostles would do on this earth would not be of themselves, but rather as they were so led to do by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, the Bible would be of men, and not of God! All of the “binding” and “loosing” that was to be done (only by inspired men) was ended with the completion of the written Word of God. Therefore, nothing can be “bound” or “loosed” today that has not already been “bound” or “loosed” in God’s Word. This being the case, it is true then that all who would be pleasing to God today are “bound” to congregational singing without the instrument in keeping with Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19. To use the instrument in violation of these passages would be to “loosen” that which the Holy Spirit has “bound”. The result of so doing is sin (Revelation 22:18-19)!

Further, we cannot “bind” or “loosen” in His name! The phrase “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” in Colossians 3:17, means by the authority of the Lord Jesus! Paul is saying in this passage, that everything a Christian does must be done by the authority of Christ. His authority can be found only in that which has already been “bound” and “loosed” through inspired men at the direction of the Holy Spirit, that is, in the Word of God!

To “loosen” where God has “bound” or to “bind” where God has “loosed” is to reject the authority of Christ; to preach a false gospel; and to be accursed of God (Galatians 1:6-9)! Such is the case with those who would employ instruments in worship to Him!

QUESTION: Does not Colossians 3:17 authorizes instrumental music when it says, “Whatever you do in word (singing) or deed (playing instruments), do all in the name of the Lord Jesus?”

ANSWER: This passage does not remotely support the above statement! The phrase “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” in Colossians 3:17, means by the authority of the Lord Jesus! It does not mean that we can do whatever we like as long as we say we are doing it as Christians to glorify Christ! Paul is simply saying in this passage, that everything a Christian does must be done only by the authority of Christ as expressed in His Word. The authority of Christ relative to music in worship to God is expressed in the preceding verse (sixteen) which limits us to vocal congregational singing, thereby excluding the use of instruments. There is no authority anywhere in the New Testament for instruments of music in worship. Since there is no authority for the “deed” of playing instruments in worship, this “deed” when performed is sinful! Just by saying or thinking “we are doing it in the name of Christ” does not change the deed from sin to righteousness!

One of the things that cause so much religious division is the unscriptural position expressed in the above statement. When people begin believing that they can do anything they want in worship to God simply by affirming that they are doing it under the banner (in the name) of Christ or Christianity, then all sorts of ungodliness in worship will be permitted. Those with this unscriptural notion

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can, and often do, perform all kinds of entertainment for themselves and others during worship to God, simply by proclaiming that such is being done under the name of Christ. We could dance in worship, perform tricks of magic, prepare and eat hamburgers, sleep, talk to our friends, or anything else we could imagine, if this were true. It is evident, however, from the New Testament that none of these things can be performed in worship without sinning (including playing on instruments), because none of them can be performed in the name of (by the authority of) Jesus Christ! To engage in any activity in worship for which there is no authority is to sin and be separated from God!

QUESTION: What is the meaning of “choir?”

ANSWER: A “choir” in a church is a group of people, generally consisting of both men and women, who often (1) lead the singing in a church, (2) sing to the church, and (3) sing for the church. In either or all of these cases, such is sinful! There is no authorization in God’s Word for singing groups in worship services! Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are instructions and exhortations relative to acceptable worship for all Christians for all time. In these passages, we are taught that our singing is to be corporate (collective or congregational) with vocally enunciated words by which we teach and admonish one another! No other type of music is authorized, and would, therefore, be in error! This is to say that the Bible does not authorize, and reckons as sin, the use of solos, singing groups, humming, whistling, drums, or any type of musical instrument!

QUESTION: Is it wrong to use instruments of music outside the church?

ANSWER: It is wrong to “worship” God with instruments of music inside the church building and outside of the church building! It is not wrong to play non-religious music on instruments. The sin is not in the instrument. The sin occurs when we introduce into worship that which God has not authorized. God has not authorized the playing of instruments in worship. It is therefore sinful to do so! The same is true of quartets and singing groups used to entertain visitors and the rest of the congregation. God has not authorized this practice. It, too, is therefore sinful!

QUESTION: What will happen to those who sin by using instruments in worship to God?

ANSWER: God will not excuse or forgive any sin where there is no repentance! Therefore, unless there is true repentance, the same thing will happen to these as all others who disobey God! Paul tells us in II Thessalonians 1:7-9, “To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and from the glory of His power.”

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QUESTION: Where in the Bible are we allowed to make inferences in one thing, but not allowed to make inferences on other things?

ANSWER: We can only infer what the Bible implies! For example: When studied in context we understand that Hebrews 2:12 does not really imply that we may sing solos in worship to God. If we infer that it does, then we have inferred improperly and err in so doing. If we infer that Matthew 26:27 implies and authorizes the use of one container only during communion, we are wrong. We must rightly divide the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15). This means that we cannot draw conclusions or inferences by taking passages out of context in order to justify personal likes and desires! We must not, for any reason or under any circumstance, infer what God has not clearly implied in His Word!

QUESTION: Would you please explain Revelation 5:8 as relates to the use of instruments of music? Does this passage justify their use in Christian worship today?

ANSWER: The book of Revelation was written in symbolic language and is not to be understood literally (Revelation 1:1, the word signified means that John was shown things in "signs," which must shortly come to pass). So it is in this passage. Notice in the immediately preceding verses the symbolic language used relative to the Lamb, an obvious reference to Christ. Surely none would hold that Christ has seven literal eyes, seven literal horns, and seven literal spirits. All of these things are figurative and represent something else! He tells us in the verse under consideration that the golden bowls of incense represents something else. In this case, incense figuratively represents the prayers of the saints. So it is with the word "harps." The writer is not speaking of literal harps, but rather in reference to something else. Most scholars hold that this reference to harps has to do with "praise" to God. Remember, heaven is not a physical place with physical things. It is a spiritual place!

In addition to this, worship service to God in the church is not remotely mentioned in this passage. If we were to try to use this verse as a basis for worship in the church, in order to be consistent, we would also have to insist that each (all) worshipper(s) have a harp and a bowl of incense. Clearly, those who would seek in this passage a pattern for Christian worship are in violation of the most basic rules of biblical interpretation!