

What about instrumental music?

2004-08-21 16:08:05 Kevin Cauley

Q: Would you please address the question of the use of instrumental music within worship?

A: According to the Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical literature, instrumental music was not introduced into the church until pope Vitalian did so in A.D. 660. Even after this point, the instrument was not used in various places to the point that Thomas Aquinas wrote in 1250, "Our church does not use musical instruments as harps and psalteries to praise God withal that she may not seem to Judaize." The Greek Orthodox Church even today does not use the instrument of music within their worship because it was not part of first century Christian worship. The very term "a cappella" means "sung as in the church." This is at least some of the historical evidence that we find outside of the Bible in regard to the worship of God with instrumental music. The first century church simply did not use it.

In addition to this historical evidence, we have the scriptures themselves. There are at least ten passages in the New Testament which discuss music in the early church and they all refer to singing. These passages are: Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:6; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; James 5:13. Not once does the New Testament refer to playing an instrument such as a harp, pipe, drum or any other stringed instrument.

Why is this so significant? This is significant because according to Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing the word of God. If there is no word of God on the subject, then one's actions cannot be by faith. If one's actions are without faith, then one cannot be pleasing to God for without faith it is impossible to be pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:6). There is no word from God regarding instrumental music. Therefore, we cannot, by faith, worship God with instrumental music. We cannot therefore be pleasing to God and worship with instrumental music. Here is the argument in logical form:

1. All actions of faith are actions based upon God's word (Romans 10:17).
2. The action of worshipping with the instrument is an action that is NOT based upon God's word.
3. Therefore the action of worshipping with the instrument is NOT an action of faith.

Allow me to set forth yet another reason for not worshipping with the instrument. We read in Hebrews 9:15 that Jesus is the mediator of a New Covenant. We have this New Covenant revealed to us in the books of Matthew through Revelation. Not one of those books mentions worshipping God with the literal instrument of music. So this cannot be something that is part of the New Covenant for which Jesus is mediator. If it is not part of the New Covenant, it is something for which Jesus does not mediate in worship. If Jesus does not mediate for this in worship, then it is vain worship. Stated in logical form the argument is:

1. All actions for which Jesus mediates are actions that are part of the New Covenant.
2. The action of worshipping with instrumental music is an action that is not part of the New Covenant.
3. Therefore the action of worshipping with instrumental music is an action that is not mediated by Jesus.

A third argument is based upon the principle of Bible authority. Whatever we do in worship to God must be authorized by God. This is the great principle set forth in Col. 3:17 "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." The phrase "in the name of the Lord Jesus" means "by the authority of the Lord Jesus." There is no New Testament authority for instrumental music. Therefore, there is no authority for it in worship today. Once again we set forth the reasoning in logical form.

1. All divinely approved actions of worship must be actions that are authorized by the Lord Jesus.
2. Instrumental music in worship is an action that is not authorized by the Lord Jesus.
3. Therefore instrumental music in worship is not a divinely approved action of worship.

Our plea for restoration rests upon the premise that the New Testament contains everything that we need to know in order to be pleasing unto God (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17) and that if we want to restore the Lord's church as it was found in the first century—as guided by the apostles through inspiration of the Holy

Spirit—then we are only going to do what they did in worship to God as revealed to us through God's word today. We cannot worship with instruments of music and do what they did. We cannot restore the New Testament church and worship with instruments of music. We give our allegiance, therefore, to Christ and His church, and not to the instrument.