
Words of Truth

If You Can Understand The Error Of Instrumental...

By: Brian A. Yeager

If you were to go throughout this country and examine groups of people that identify themselves as churches of Christ, you would find most have one thing in common. That one commonality is that most churches of Christ do not use mechanical instruments of music in their worship services to God. If you were to ask the many members of those congregations why they don't use mechanical instruments of music to worship God you would get a common answer. That common answer would be that God tells Christians to sing to Him and that is it. Now, some might have some Scriptural knowledge and some might provide more depth to their answer, but the common answer would be that God didn't tell us to use them.

Those churches of Christ that do not use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God are right on that point. Those people generally understand that we are under the New Testament law of Christ today (Matthew 26:28, Acts 13:38-39, Romans 7:1-6, Galatians 3:10-29, Ephesians 2:11-17, Colossians 2:10-17, and Hebrews 6:9-10:21). With that knowledge, they understand that throughout the New Testament we only see examples and instructions to sing (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26, Acts 16:25, Romans 15:9, I Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:19-20, Colossians 3:16-17, Hebrews 2:12, and James 5:13). That is right!

As long as I have been a follower of Christ (28 years as of right now), I have always been a member of congregations that refused to use mechanical instrumental music to worship God. However, in the beginning of those years, the congregations I was erringly a member of did various other things that are not mentioned in the New Testament. I have looked back on those years an innumerable amount of times. I have asked myself over and over again how I could have understood that mechanical instruments of music in worship was wrong because there was no authority, but not apply that same principle to MANY other things we did. If one can properly reason that mechanical instruments of music is wrong in worship to God because of lacking authority, they should be able to apply that same reasoning to other unscriptural matters. My conclusions scared me. I hope they will help you.

Traditionalism Is At Play Here

Throughout the New Testament we see the errors of following human traditions (Matthew 15:1-14, Colossians 2:4-23, and I Peter 1:18). I have known that since before obeying the Gospel. However, I have fallen prey to traditionalism more times than I can count.

When I was a teenager, congregations I was a member of had Vacation Bible School, congregational potluck dinners, congregational organized social events (birthday parties, baby showers, weddings, funerals, New Year’s Eve parties, teen lock-ins, sporting events, etc.), and such things the Scriptures never speak of. I didn’t question them. Since they had been practiced for years, I just assumed they were right. As a young Christian man, I taught things I had always heard taught but really couldn’t prove through the Scriptures. I said we had “generic authority” for them. Yet, I didn’t apply that to mechanical instruments of music in worship to God. Why? I was following church of Christ traditions. While I would say we need to prove [test] all things (I Thessalonians 5:21), I spent years not applying that.

Throughout the years I have been part of or have seen pitch pipes used without authority from God, the Lord’s Supper being offered at multiple services for those who missed earlier times, unscriptural songs being sung, the Lord’s money used on hundreds of things He never spoke of, erring prayers, etc. I was told men must wear a dress shirt and tie to worship God. In my early years, I didn’t question any of it. When I began to question it, I was often the only one to do so. Why? How can so many people stand so diligently against mechanical instruments of music in worship and not use that same reasoning elsewhere? More of us than not have fallen into those traditions and some of them we held more dear than others.

Loyal To Certain Traditions Beyond Reason

Where is the authority for using the Lord’s money to maintain a lawn at a meeting facility we built using His money without His authority? Wait, what did I just write? One time I discussed this with a person whom I thought was a brother in Christ. He argued that God wanted a tabernacle (Exodus 25:1-9) and a temple (II Samuel 7:1-17). He then argued that since those things were authorized under the Old Law, we can infer such authority in the New Testament. WHAT? Why can’t we use mechanical instruments of music then? Mechanical instruments of music go back even before the Law of Moses (Genesis 4:21). Meaning, they predate the tabernacle and the temple. God had been pleased by mechanical instruments of music in worship to Him many times in the Old Testament (Exodus 15:1-21, Leviticus 23:24, Numbers 10:10, I Chronicles 15:16, Psalms 81:1-3, Psalms 149:1-3, Psalms 150:1-6, Jeremiah 31:4, etc.). Therefore, if we would use the “Old Testament” as authority for anything, we’d have to be consistent and start singing, playing instruments, dancing, and even practicing polygamy (I Samuel 30:5) to be consistent.

Conclusion

We are rightly against the usage of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God because we are not told to do so in the New Testament. Brethren, we MUST be sure that we use the same reasoning on everything else. To fail in such makes us hypocrites in various ways (Matthew 7:1-5). Let’s be consistently right (Ephesians 5:6-10)!