

# A CAPELLA MUSIC IN NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP

3. We preach that when one reaches the age to know right from wrong we become sinners from our wrong choices– and that you must be born again to be saved by God.
  - a. You are begotten by the Spirit of God when you are convicted of of your sins the truthfulness of the Gospel–
  - b. You must then turn from sin in repentance– (Acts 17:30-31)
  - c. And be baptized into the family of God– receiving the remission of sins and all the spiritual blessings that are found in Christ. [Acts 17:30-31; Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-5; Eph. 1:3.]
4. If you are not a simple Christian as defined in the New Testament we invite you to come and yield yourself to Christ in obedience to the gospel, as we stand and sing.

[Transcript of a sermon delivered at the Rogersville Church of Christ on Sunday March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005.]

Some sources use:

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Ferguson, Everett, The New Testament Church, ACC Press, Abilene, Tx., c. 1968

Ferguson, Everett. Early Christians Speak (Life and Faith in the First Three Centuries), Abilene, Texas, c. 1971

Ferguson, Everett. A Capella Music In The Public Worship of the Church. Biblical Research Press: Abilene, Texas, c. 1972

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Introduction:

1. I want to speak principally to the young people tonight. But not about teenage problems – but about religion. And I hope the adults will listen it also.
  - a. Because, I know that you talk to your friends a lot about religion. You ask each other questions, and I know that one of the questions you are most frequently asked is, “Why doesn’t the Church of Christ use music?”
  - b. Well, first, young people, let’s look at the word “music”.
  - c. You see, young people we do use music, we use “vocal music.”
2. You see, the word “music” is what would be called, “generic” that is, it is like an umbrella term, and covers a lot. It covers three kinds of music. 1) Instrumental music, 2) vocal music, and 3) mixed instrumental and vocal music.
  - a. So, we do have music, it is vocal music.
  - b. So, really the question is, “Why don’t we use a piano or an organ in our worship?”
3. As we look at this question, I want us to realize the fundamental way that we look at the Bible.
  - a. We believe it is the inspired Word of God. **2Tim. 3:16; 2Peter 1:21**
  - b. We believe as the Word of God, we should let it direct us in all matters of faith.
  - c. Look at **Col. 3:16** “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*”, that is, by the authority of the Lord.
  - d. Look also at **1 Peter 4:11**, “If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.” The term “*oracles*” is found 4 times in the New Testament. It means the “God’s words” or Scriptures.
    - 1) This passage is saying that if any man speaks, teaches/ preachers, he is to speak as the Word of God speaks.
  - e. Look at the warning God gave in **Deut. 4:2**. We are not to add to nor take away from the Word of God.

- f. I'm sure that you've heard preachers give a lot of examples from the scriptures about some who tried to change God's Word. It is imperative that we let the Scriptures speak, and not add to them in our religious practice, nor take away.
3. Let's look at an example from the communion. We have unleavened bread and unleavened drink on the Lord's Table. The drink, by the way, is never called "wine" in its connection with the Lord's Supper. It is very clearly, unleavened drink, never fermented, and is called, "the fruit of the vine."
- But would we think of adding another food item to the table?
  - Why not?
  - When the Lord specified what is to be used, that rules out everything else.

#### I. WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT SAY –

1. We find several occasions where singing was present in the life and worship of the early Christians.
- We find it mentioned – NINE TIMES
    - Matthew 26:30
    - Mark 14:26
    - Acts 16:25
    - Romans 15:9
    - 1Cor. 14:15
    - Eph. 5:19
    - Col. 3:16
    - Heb. 2:12
    - James 5:13
  - Other passages also to be considered:
    - Acts 2:47 and 2) Hebrews 13:15
  - This was rooted in the practice of Jesus and his disciples – Mark 14:26 *"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."*
2. But there is just as clearly no reference to instrumental music in Christian worship in any New Testament text.
- The debate of some contending for instrumental accompaniment have focused on Ephesians 5:19 and the Greek word *psallo*, "making melody"

#### IV. Argument that Instrumental Music is Just an AID.

- What is an aid? The basket or plate for the contribution is an aid to carry out the command of the Lord.
  - The trays for the Lord's Supper, aids us in observing that.
  - The song book for singing is an aid, but it does not produce any kind of "music" that substitutes for "singing."
  - In teaching – we have class rooms, and work books which are aids.
- An "aid" does not change the practice or add to or subtract from what it is to be done.
  - But the instrument adds to the MUSIC – it is an addition – and as such it is not authorized.
  - Peanut butter or steak on the Lord's Table would be an addition and is not authorized.
  - No one would **think** of adding any other food item to the communion but only use that which is authorized! Why then add another other kind of music than that which is authorized!
  - The **same** authority that would permit adding one would permit the other! Authority to make such changes comes from man and not from the Lord, Matt 15.9, Mark 7.7.

#### CONCLUSION:

- We conclude that the use of instrumental music was done away with the rituals of the Judaic Temple – and it found no place in the spiritual worship of the church.
  - Worship and the praise of God is to come from the heart! The instrument is cold does not give praise for God. John 4:24.
- You see, we are trying to be loyal to the Bible and the worshiping of God in spirit and in truth just as early Christians worshiped.
  - This is our commitment here at Rogersville.  
Back to God's way in all matters of faith and religion.

- d. When the Protestant Reformation came along the reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were split over whether it was proper to use instrumental music or not.
- 1) The Lutherans and the Anglicans kept the Roman Catholic practice.
  - 2) The Reformed Church led by John Calvin, and the Anabaptist, the Mennonites, and others rejected it as not proper.
  - 3) To this day several religious groups refuse to use it in their worship, some Presbyterians, Mennonites, some Baptist groups, and Greek Catholics.
2. An interesting argument is seen in the term that is used in musical circles for unaccompanied singing.
- a. One of the strongest arguments is the very word *acapella*. This word comes from the Latin by way of Italian, and means “*in the style of the church*” “*as is done in the church*”.
  - b. This very word is evidence that in ancient times the church didn’t use instrumental music in the accompaniment of its praises to God.
3. We want to restore the practice and unity of the New Testament church. We believe that if we do things in Bible ways this would be a basis of unity. The church of Christ is ecumenical. The ecumenical ground to occupy is to teach and practice acapella singing in worship.
- a. Now we have noticed that the New Testament first century practice and that history of the first ten centuries shows that worship was without the instruments in church music. We’ve seen how and when it was added to modern worship.
  - b. NOTE: – It was not absent from the N.T. worship and from the first ten centuries because it was not available– some might try to make this argument. It was available and was used in pagan temple worship and in entertainment. But it was just as definitely not used in spiritual worship of the Lord God.

(The Greek word *ado* = singing.)

- Some try to make “making melody” to mean “singing to the accompaniment of a plucked instrument”.
- b. This argument must realize that in the O.T. in the Greek LXX where it sometimes means plucking the strings of an instrument, that the instrument is named. [ cf. . p5 Zamar, See Note # 2] Note: See 1Sam. 16:16; Ps. 33:2; Ps. 81:2; Ps 149:3; Isa. 23:16;
    - 1) It is noted by lexicographers that usually it meant “singing praises”, and if it referred to playing an instrument, the instrument was named.
  - c. All the lexicographers agree that in the New Testament it means singing praises. And IF one attempted to look at Ephesians 5:19 from an O.T. point of view, we notice that the instrument that is to be played is mentioned – the *plucking* that is to accompany Christian singing is the plucking of the “heart” strings.
3. A FACT – Instrumental music was used by the approval of God in the Temple in connections with the rituals that accompanied the sacrifices. But according to Philo and Rabbinic literature in the Talmud, it was never used in the synagogues where singing was without instrumental accompaniment.
- a) The Mishna gave instructions to the Levites how they were to wash their hands and feet in the laver before picking up the holy musical instruments. It gave instructions as to just what precise moment the symbols were to be clapped and the trumpet blown.
  - b) It was an intricate part of the temple ritual – [ cf. p. 31, Note # 3]
  - c) New Testament church worship was patterned after the synagogue worship and not the worship of the Temple. See ***James 2:2*** [Some believe James is a very early book and that out his Jewish background he called the Christian assembly a “*synagogue*”.]

## II. A LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

1. The writings of Church Fathers include the Apostolic Fathers; the Ante-Nicene Fathers (10 volumes) and the two series of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers (30 volumes).
  - a. No instrumental music is found in Christian worship in the first six centuries. When it was first introduced into a church service in the seventh century for a short while, we find strong arguments were raised against it.
    - 1) Gregory the Great, was Bishop of Rome 590-604 A.D. Many of his sermons and statements are found in the Post Nicene collection. He forbid the use of the instrument that had just been introduced into one of the churches in Rome. That settled the issue in the churches for centuries.
    - 2) The Greek Orthodox Church never used instrumental music.
  - b. From the contention which resulted in its removal– we know that there was none used previous to this.
2. The debate among the church fathers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries centered on whether a Christian could sing party music and whether instruments of music could be used for such entertainment occasions.
  - a. Some were extreme and emphatically against Christian leisure time and frolicking with entertainment where plucking on harps, guitars, and blowing on flutes were used.
    - 1) One reason their position was so extreme was that generally such was done in pagan temples in an atmosphere of dancing and intoxication, and places of low morals.
    - 2) Such music was considered worldly and frowned upon.
  - b. The middle course was generally upheld however. Holding that Christians could attend entertainment and have parties and sing and play– providing they didn't sing the obscene songs often so popular, nor the pagan temple songs, but only what was considered decent songs.
  - c. It was still held that Christians should not do these things nor frequent those place that would hurt their Christian influence.

3. Statements written by Christians describing their Christian worship to outsiders who never attended Christian services and were not acquainted with them, specifically laid out that they sang without the accompaniment of any instrument.
4. Commentaries made by the church fathers on the O.T. and the N.T. scriptures, such as Theodoret [ p. 35ff, & p. 54] on the Psalms pointed out the contrast between Mosaic use of the instruments and the Christian's non-use.
5. The subject is also mentioned in a some sermons which were not arguing against it, for it was not used– but some sermons pointed out that the instrument of the Christian to accompany his singing was his heart. These arguments were with pagans. The argument was that *incense* gave way to prayer, and *sacrifice* gave way to spiritual praise.

## III. HISTORY OF THE INTRODUCTION OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC INTO CHRISTIAN WORSHIP:

1. Sometime during the early 7<sup>th</sup> century a gift was made by a political ruler to a church or congregation in Rome. It's use created a controversy and it was soon withdrawn.
  - b. History is not clear at what precise moment it was re-introduced. Some say as early as the ten century, but that's guessing. The testimony is for the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century. It appears first, not in accompaniment to singing in Church, but as background music for ritual processions or parades by Roman Catholic churches through the towns in Spain and then Italy.
  - c. NOTE: – it was never introduced into the Greek Orthodox Catholic church and they remained strongly against it's use. Instrumental music was used in the Emperor's court – but never in the church.