

## Music In God's Church (Man-Made or God-Made)

\*Just a note before we begin:

The issue of whether the Lord's church (the *singular* church of the Bible) should be involved in the use of man-made instruments (within the worship assembly), has been the topic of heated discussion for over 1,600 years. You might notice I didn't use the round number of '2,000' in reference to the controversy. That's because it was a 'non issue' in the 1<sup>st</sup> century church, as both Biblical and secular history affirm that man-made instruments were *not* included in NT worship until the Roman Catholic Church decided they needed to be used. This aberration of worship from **the Divine Pattern** has persisted since that time. Yet, as we shall see, the real issue surrounding this topic is not 'instruments' but **the Authority** to include (intrude) them in God's worship. He clearly could have commanded them, and didn't. The question of Authority also speaks to the issue of **Submission**. And submission is defined and applied to human life as '*giving up of what I want, and doing what my Lord wants*'. Submission speaks to a lack of spontaneous willfulness, and of giving place to the wishes of the Master.

This and this alone is the true issue in the discussion of whether we should add anything to the worship which was instituted by and for, *God*. **That it belongs to Him, and to Him alone, that it is sacred to Him and that it should be sacred to us, is the singular measure of whether we have submitted to our Creator.**

Those who will not accede to this basic Biblical principle will have little regard for the following proofs which are so clearly laid out in scripture. However, as God (thru Paul) has told all of us to "*study to show ourselves approved unto God*" (II Tim 2:15), it is incumbent upon us that we do so, generationally, regardless of what the most popular new doctrine might be. Additionally, as we are to '*stand in the ways and seek the old paths*' (Jer 6:16), we would be well served if we give this discussion the weight it is due. And as always, these things must be evident *if language has any meaning*.

In this regard, this study will do the reader no good if he (she) is not willing to put aside the wisdom of men and submit himself/herself solely to Scripture.

That said, the following is submitted for your study by several scholars, many of whom publish *The Carolina Messenger*: David Pharr (editor), J. T. Wheeler (chairman and contributor), John Wheeler (contributor), Brett Pharr (contributor), Terry Gunnels (contributor) and myself (Steven Hurst) with additional comments.

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### **I. The Instrument Designated In Scripture For The NT Church Is Both Clearly Stated And Is Easily Settled.** (It is the human heart.)

#### **A. Passages to consider:**

1. "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19-20)
2. Eph 5:19 "*make music in (with) your heart, unto the Lord*"
3. additional scripture which add to this thought is I Cor 4:6

*“And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to go beyond that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.” (ASV)*

**B. In Effect, any other attitude regarding God’s authority on the subject of adding man’s doctrines to Biblical worship, is *Will-Worship* and will forever be unacceptable to God. (Col 2:22-23)**

*“Which all are to perish with the using after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.” (cf- Deut 4:2; Prov 30:6; Rev 22:18-19)*

## **II. The Instrument Chosen For Worship Matters Because It Matters How We Worship.**

**John 4:24** *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”*

**John 17:17** *” Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”*

**A. Worship centered only on man’s authority is vain (vapid, void, useless- Mt 5:9), again making it ‘willful’ and unacceptable to God. (Col 2:23) *Such worship condemned men in the past and will continue to do so today.\****

*\*No degree of ‘sincerity, upstanding character or good intentions’ will change the fact that *man’s* standards of worship are wrong when they transgress scripture. *Nothing will make that which is wrong, right. “9-11”* meets all of the standards of ‘Good Intentions-Sincerity-Devotion-and Effectiveness’, while these men murdered thousands of innocent men and women in the name of Allah. They actually *believed* they were serving God! This heinous act of rebellion to God’s specified code of conduct is just as unacceptable as any other form of rebellion. As difficult as it is for us to equate (cross-culturally), both ‘9/11’ and the divisions caused by men in the Lord’s church, they result in the same degree of disastrous and ineffective worship which God has always rejected. Men learned this tragic lesson throughout the OT; men must also learn this lesson today.*

## **III. God’s People Are Commanded To ‘Prove All Things’ & To ‘Hold Fast (only) To That Which Is Good’ (I Thess 5:21)**

**A. Four Things are Taught or Necessarily Implied by this verse:**

- 1. *We are commanded to Prove all things* (by & in scripture).**
- 2. *All Acceptable (good) Things can be proven* (by scripture).**
- 3. *All Proven Things* (in scripture) *are to be Accepted & Practiced.***
- 4. *All things Not Proven are to be Rejected* (doctrinally).**

**- Howard Winters, Up Top Bethany**

**B. Thus:** All Beliefs, Practices and Doctrines must to be examined (tested) *scripturally*, to prove whether they not only seem good, but actually *are* good. Things, Beliefs, Practices or Doctrines which can not be tested and proven to be acceptable *must therefore be rejected and shunned by God's true church.* (II Cor 13:5 clearly warns us that proving and examining requires an honest and submissive heart. This is true in every instance of obedience to the Lord.)

#### **IV. The Writers of the NT Were Guided (by the Holy Spirit) to Include Only Those Things in the Pattern of God's Church, Which Were Consistent w/the Purposes of God.**

**-John 16:13** "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*"

**-Matt 28:19-20** "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*"

If anything can be agreed upon it must be the premise that **language has meaning.** Without this essential mainstay, intellectual understanding and reliable communication fail, and chaos ensues (Gen 11:1-9). This singular point emphasizes the importance of defining the terms "**All Truth**" and "**All Things**", relative to their impact on our eternal destiny.

Thus:

- "**All Things**" must be interpreted as '*all truths which pertain to the doctrines of the Godhead*'. 'All Things' must therefore mean that the Holy Spirit did not leave anything out which was acceptable to God. 'All Things' therefore, limits acts of worship, indeed all conduct in life, by the specific things included by the Writers, to the exclusion of all else.

- "**All Truth**" is applicable in the same way. As all truth relating to proper worship is acceptable to God, *all additions to the completed truth are unacceptable.* This was true 2,000 years ago and remains so, today.

- **Therefore**, if it is commanded by the Divine Writers (as guided by the Holy Spirit), it is not only right to observe it, but it is necessary for one's salvation. If it is not commanded or taught in these writings, it is an addition of man and is to be avoided as it will preclude one from being saved.

**Necessary Conclusion:** Man's idea of a church today (as compared to the 1<sup>st</sup> century church) **certainly allows for a 'change with the times' attitude.** We call that '**denominationalism**'. However, **this was neither God's design nor his intent for the church.** As God's church has been designed to be '**timeless**', it is essential that we place appropriate emphasis on the

