

If Any Man Speak

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One of life's grandest blessings is our ability to discuss with others. Speech, when correctly used, is of essential benefit. Used incorrectly, talk can do much harm. The difference between the two is often in the speaker's attitude and motive. The tongue is a "little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!" (James 3:5). Jesus asked the Pharisees, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" (Matt. 12:34). Christians must consider attitude in their speech and guard their words.

We all should be impressed with the awesome power of the tongue. Improperly used, James says, the tongue can defile the whole body (James 3:6). Properly used speech can do much good. "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6). Consider the proper use of language.

In teaching truth, we must "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Here is the caveat. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). Jesus tells his disciples to "go and teach all nations" but their teaching is to be the things he "commanded them" (Matthew 28:19).

In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul tells Timothy to "preach the word." He warns, "for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

A proper use for human speech is “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). There is also occasion for sealed lips and answering not a word (See John 19:9). In worship of God, acceptable worship must be “in spirit and in truth” – correct in attitude and correct in action. The Bible names five acts of worship – singing, praying, teaching, communion, and giving. Singing, praying, and teaching require speech. “Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). Bringing our feelings into sweet harmony with the words of a song, a public prayer, or the presentation of God’s word shows our love for a loving God.

In confession of Jesus, there are also five steps that bring salvation. The New Testament tells us to hear God’s truth, believe it, repent of our unholy life, confess Jesus as Lord, and submit to water baptism. It is the acceptance and obedience of these steps that puts us “in Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

Confession of Jesus as the resurrected son of God is to be verbal. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10).

In defense of truth: Many problems facing the church today stem from our unwillingness to defend God’s truth. A Christian is to be ready always to teach the truth and protect it. We fear and studiously avoid controversy to the disgrace of the gospel and our own shame. Argument for the sake of argument is infamy, but argument in defense of truth is honorable and necessary. We forget Jesus was a brilliant debater.

Paul said that “in the defense and confirmation of the gospel” we are “partakers of grace” (Phil. 1:7). Our knowledge enables us to approve the things that are excellent (and therefore

disapprove things that are contrary to truth) that we may be “void of offence unto the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:10). We must be “bold to speak the word of God without fear... set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:14, 16).

“Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4). Yes, our speech is very serious business. Jesus said, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. 12:37). Watch your mouth and pay attention to your words. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:1, 7). What you say can condemn you! What you ought to say, but fail to speak, also can condemn you! Happy is silence in the face of slander and injustice.

Musical Instruments in the Temple

By Owen D. Olbricht

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An argument often made for the use of musical instruments in worship is that by worshipping in the temple early Christians showed they had no problem with their being used in worship. A proof text states, “So continuing daily with one accord the

temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (Acts 2:46; NKJV).

Some things that are assumed are not stated in the above passage—that Christians were:

- Assembling in the area of the temple where Jews were worshiping.
- Worshiping where musical instruments were being used.
- Giving approval of musical instruments by assembling in the temple.
- Meeting during the time of day when the Levites were singing with musical instrumentals.

These assumptions have at least four major flaws.

Apostles' Teaching

First – Instead of engaging in Jewish practices, early Christians continued to observe what Jesus commanded as taught by the apostles (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42). The apostles could not have taught Christians in an assembly that included Jewish leaders, for they threatened and flogged the apostles for preaching Jesus in the temple (Acts 4:1-3, 17-18, 21; 5:28, 33, 40).

Neither example nor command to use musical instruments is found in the writings of the apostles. If such are not found, then early Christians were neither using nor approving them, consequently, musical instruments cannot be used based on apostolic authority.

Where They Met

Second – Christians met in Solomon's porch, not in the section of the temple where the Levites sang with musical instruments. Herod's temple complex was not like a large, modern church auditorium where all the worshipers gathered in one place.

Josephus described the external dimensions of the temple as follows:

According to Josephus (Ant xv.11.3 [400], each side was about 180 m. (600 ft) long (500 cubits, according to the Mish. Middoth ii.1, though here we may suspect the influence of Ezk. 41:20). (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. Four, Q-Z, fully revised, 1988, p 771).

The temple complex, which was 600 feet by 600 feet, was larger than four football fields. Its outer walls enclosed four inner sections of the temple: the sanctuary that was in the upper court, which was adjacent to the woman's court. These were inside the outer most court, the large Gentile's court.

In the upper court was the temple sanctuary (30 by 90 feet), which included the holy place (30 by 60 feet) that only the priests and Levites could enter, and the most holy place (30 by 30 feet) that only the high priest could enter once a year. The more than 3,000 Christians (Acts 2:41) could neither have assembled in the sanctuary of the temple where the priests alone could go nor could they have crowded into it.

Between the upper court and the woman's court were the fifteen steps where the Levites sang with musical instruments during the morning and evening sacrifices.

Fifteen steps led up to the Upper Court, which was bounded by a wall, and where was the celebrated Nicanor Gate, covered with Corinthian brass. Here the Levites, who conducted the musical part of the service, were placed (Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, p. 245.).

This is confirmed by the Jewish Mishna:

And Levites without numbers with harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets and other musical instruments were there upon the fifteen steps leading down from the court of the Israelites

to the court of the women, corresponding to the fifteen songs of ascents in the Psalms [120- 134]. It was upon these [and not at the side of the altar where they performed at the time of the offering of sacrifices] that the Levites stood with their instruments of music and sang their songs (Everett Ferguson, A Cappella Music in Public Worship of the Church, Abilene Texas, Biblical Research Press, 1972, p. 31; quoted from a translation of The Mishna by Herbert Dandy, London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

The walled woman's court and the upper court were inside the large Gentiles' court from which Jesus drove the Jews who were buying and selling animals (Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45; John 2:14). Solomon's porch, approximately 600 feet long, where Christians met (Act 5:12) was open to the Gentile court on one side and enclosed by the outer wall on the other side.

By meeting in Solomon's porch, Christians could assemble without seeing or hearing the Jewish services. Walls and more than 300 feet, a football field length, separated the assembled Christians from the animal sacrifices and the fifteen steps where the Levites were singing and playing instruments. When they entered the temple, they could pass through the outer gates and walk across the Gentile court to Solomon's porch without coming near to the place where Jewish religious ceremonies were being conducted.

The Levites sang with instruments during the morning and evening sacrifices (Exod. 29:38-42; Num. 28:3, 4; 1 Chron. 16:40-42). It is not a foregone conclusion that Christians met during these times, for they had at least eight hours between the morning and evening sacrifices when they could meet.

Christians met in the temple because they needed a large meeting place, like Solomon's porch, and not because they desired to worship where the Jews were worshiping. The burden

of proof is on those who claim that by meeting in the temple Christians showed that they were not against musical instruments being used in worship.

Third – If Christians saw nothing wrong with worshiping in the temple where the Levites were singing with instruments, the same would have been true concerning their assembling where animal sacrifices were being used in worship, for the musical renditions were associated with the animal sacrifices. Their attitude toward the one would have been the same as their attitude toward the other.

When David brought the Ark of the Covenant into the tabernacle, he worshiped with singing, instrumental music, dancing, and animal sacrifices (1 Chron. 15:17-29). Solomon did the same, except for dancing, when he brought the ark into the temple (2 Chron. 5:11-14). After this he prayed. “Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple” (2 Chron. 7:1).

The ceremony continued with Solomon and all the people worshiping in the temple by sacrificing hundreds of oxen and sheep to the Lord while the Levites played musical instruments (2 Chron. 7:5-7). If God showed his approval of musical instruments in worship, thus acceptable for Christian worship, by filling the temple with a cloud (2 Chron. 5:13, 14), as some have argued, then God’s lighting the sacrifice and his glory filling the temple when animals were sacrificed (2 Chron. 7:1) showed his approval of them in worship, hence meaning they are all right for Christian worship. If not, why not?

Some would object to this line of argument by contending that the New Testament teaches that Jesus’ sacrifice replaced animal sacrifices but nowhere states that musical instruments are no longer to be used. Sin sacrifices were replaced by the death of Jesus (Heb. 5:1-3; 7:27; 9:9-14; 24-28; 10:1-18), but

what passage in the New Testament specifically states that worship sacrifices were abolished?

Worship offerings such as thank, freewill, first fruit, and peace offerings were as prevalent as sin sacrifices. Neither Jesus, the book of Acts, nor any other New Testament documents specifically state that worship sacrifices were abolished. If a specific statement must be made before an Old Testament practice is not to be used, then worship sacrifices are still acceptable to God. However, the statement that the “first” was replaced by the “second” (Heb. 10:9) is proof that not only worship with animal sacrifices was abolished, but that the complete Old Testament sacrificial and worship systems were set aside. The only way to bring any practice of the Old Testament into Christian worship is to find that practice taught in the New Testament.

Singers Were Male Levites

Fourth – Male members (not women) of the tribe of Levi (2 Chron. 5:12; 35:14, 15; Neh. 11:22) were the only ones who sang with musical instruments during the animal sacrifices (1 Chron. 15:16-26; 2 Chron. 5:6-14; 29:27-35; 35:13-16). If temple worship can be used as a pattern, then singing and playing of instrument should be done only by male Levites.

Other Considerations

Some argue that Christians should feel free to practice what they read in the book of Psalms about worshiping with musical instruments. If this is true, then Christians should follow the statements in Psalms concerning the use of animal sacrifices in worship (Pss. 20:1-3; 50:7, 8; 51:18, 19; 66:13-15; 96:8, 9; see also Jer. 17:26; 33:15-18). David wrote that he would “offer in His tent [tabernacle] sacrifices with shouts of joy” (Ps. 27:6; NASB). Christians also should praise God with a “two-edged sword in their hands, to execute

vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the written judgment" (Ps. 149:6b-9a; NKJV). If musical instrument should be accepted in worship based on Psalms, so also should animal sacrifices and swords for vengeance.

Altars for Sacrifice

Altars for worship sacrifices were used before the Law (Gen. 8:20), during the Law age (Exod. 20:24; 24:4-6; 27:1-6), and were seen in heavenly visions by John while he was on the Island of Patmos (Rev. 6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7). If Christians can use musical instruments because they were used in worship before the Law commanded in the Old Testament and pictured in the book of Revelation, then they can use sacrifice altars in worship. If anyone should respond that the altar in the book of Revelation is symbolical, then musical instruments should also be considered symbolical.

Synagogues

All historical evidence indicates that Christians worshipped without musical instruments for many centuries after the beginning of the church. Everett Ferguson wrote, "Recent studies put the introduction of instrumental music even later than the dates found in reference books. It was perhaps as late as the tenth century when the organ was played as part of the service" (Ferguson, *ibid.*, 81).

Some explain that the reason for non-use of musical instruments in worship by Christians was that they were influenced by Jewish synagogues where instruments were not used. They gathered in homes (Rom. 16:3-6; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2) instead of Jewish synagogues. Even though they came out of Judaism, they were guided by the apostles instead of Jewish practices and traditions. The question then

is:

Were early Christians influenced by temple worship to look favorably on musical instrument or the synagogue to turn against them? The answer is neither. Apostolic teaching, not Jewish customs, was what governed Christian worship.

Conclusion

No conclusive argument can be made that Christians associated with, accepted, or used instrumental music based on their assembling in the temple. Even though Christians gathered there for a short period of time before persecution scattered them (Acts 8:1), they met in Solomon's porch, a meeting place far removed and isolated from the singing and playing of musical instruments and animal sacrifices. Instead of following Jewish practices, Christians continued in the apostles teaching (Acts 2:42:). Christians should do the same today.