

New Testament Worship – Worshiping in Song

Dub McClish

The New Testament church also worshipped God by singing “Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” as an important part of worship. The joy and thanksgivings that Christians felt because they had been redeemed from their sins by Christ were expressed in appropriate songs. That this practice was acceptable to God is seen in the fact that it was commanded by the apostle Paul (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). These verses also indicate another important function of their worship in song: they taught and admonished each other as they sang “from the heart.” They were reminded to sing “with the spirit and with the understanding” (1 Cor. 14:15).

Instruments of music were never found in the worship of the first century church. It was not for lack of availability, for they were all around the early saints in idolatrous worship and were likely still in use among the Jews. The fact that they were left out of the worship of the church was surely not a mere accident. Since the first century, uninspired history reveals that the imprint of vocal music only from the time of the apostles was so strong that instrumental music in worship was not even introduced until several centuries later, and then over very strong objections. It is strange that religious people now living think it odd if instruments are **not** used in worship. The question should not be directed to those who refuse their use, “Why **don’t** you use instruments?” It should be directed toward those who use them, “Why **do** you use instruments?” The word we commonly use for unaccompanied singing – a cappella – is significant. It is an Italian term which literally means, “in the chapel (church) style.” This very word is but one more testimony that church historians of all ages and beliefs generally agree that the New Testament church worshipped with no instrumental accompaniment.

“But what difference does it make if a piano, guitar or organ is used in worship?” you might ask. It is a question of our respect for the authority of the New Testament. If one person can add instruments to the singing, another can add chocolate cake and coffee to the Lord’s supper by the very same reasoning. It is a simple fact that instruments of music in worship are unauthorized by the New Testament and those who are determined to follow the New Testament pattern of worship will not and cannot use them for this very reason.

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