



Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes Pearls Study Series

*The
Gospel
is for
ALL*

Sample Chapter

A light gray world map with a grid overlay, serving as a background for the title and author information.

Chapter 12: Acts 16:25

Singing God's Way

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“Why don’t you use some kind of mechanical instrument in worship?” This is a question that is often raised by those who leave denominations and take their stand with the Lord and His one body, the church. If they have never been taught why we do not use mechanical instruments in worship, then they need to have the matter settled in their own hearts and minds. Many times our own brethren do not fully understand the WHY we do not use them. Some have been known to say we just have a tradition that we don’t do it. A preacher recently made this observation:

“The reason we don’t use music in the worship setting is that our congregations have taken a very simple approach to worship. We have tried to have what we think is first century worship, or what a first century worship would look like if it were translated to our time. I guess the fundamental reason why we opt for a cappella tradition is that we think it sounds good and encourages everyone to participate.”

How sad is this explanation from a minister of God’s Word! He stands in the pulpit and claims to be a preacher of the gospel, but he guesses that we have a tradition of singing a cappella and not using mechanical instruments in worship. To the person who is coming from denominations, this is confusing indeed. They just left behind a church that was built on traditions. But refusing to use a mechanical instrument of music in worship is not a tradition. The real problem here is whether or not we are going to have a proper respect for the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Today, I want you to serve on a jury. You may not be old enough to serve on a jury in real life, but I am going to ask that you honestly look at the facts of this matter. Many people consider instruments to be an issue problem, not a scriptural problem. So, as a jury member today, I ask that you consider the facts of this case. You will be asked to make a decision regarding singing: a cappella singing vs.

mechanical instrumental music in the worship. My aim is to help you better understand the difference between man's view and what the Bible says on this matter.

While our main topic is the discussion of using mechanical instruments in worshipping God, there is far more involved than that. Colossians 3:15-17 tells us, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

How beautifully simple are these words. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." To really appreciate this, we must go back to Colossians 1:15-18: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." No doubt about it: in the created universe the Lord is in control. He is preeminent. He upholds all things by the word of His power. "He is the head of the body, the church..."

So the first fact we know, my dear jury members, is that Christ is in control of the created universe and also the hearts and lives of those men and women who have been called out of the world and are part of His church. He is preeminent. What exactly does that mean? Well, it means He is supreme, above all others and superior. He is indeed the head of the church.

People become confused when we say Christ is the head of the church, but they have no problem understanding a national championship football team. They know that the head coach is head of a football team. These same people understand that the president of the United States is the head of the government. If we can understand what it means to be the head of a football team or a country, we shouldn't have a problem appreciating the fact that Christ is the head of the church. But how does He function as the head of the church? He is obviously no longer on earth physically. In fact, our Bibles tell us where the head of the church is now located:

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:1-2)

So where is Jesus? Is He on Earth or in heaven? The problem is how can Jesus be in heaven and be the head of His church on Earth? Some people have given their own explanations of that. One leader of a large religious group said, “The church has two heads. The heavenly head and that is Jesus. But he has a vicar on earth and that head of the church on earth is his representative here. When that head of the church speaks...then what he says is just as binding as what the head of the church in heaven says.”

Is this the truth? Could a man, a human with all of human’s faults, be the head of the church? No, that is not how the Scriptures explain it. Hebrews 9:15 explains that Jesus is the mediator of a New Testament. He is the maker, author and mediator of a New Testament. That is how He functions as the head of His church. His death, burial and resurrection gave Him that right. In His New Testament, He tells us how to be saved from our sins, how to worship God acceptably and how to live acceptably so that we please Him and can one day go home and live with Him eternally in heaven. When we really appreciate that fact, we won’t be going back to the Old Testament to try and find authority for what we do in our worship service.

People say, “Well, David, who was a man after God’s own heart, used mechanical instruments of music in worship to God.” Yes, he did. He also kept the Sabbath day, practiced marrying of many wives and offered animal sacrifices. If we are going to follow what David did, then we really should do all that he did, shouldn’t we? The problem is not what David did, but the fact that he is not the head of the church. David was a man after God’s own heart, but he lived in a different covenant. We live under a new covenant. The one that Jeremiah prophesied of in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

So, jurors, I present to you another fact. We now know that Christ is the head of the church. Do we accept the head of the church? If we are going to be in the church that belongs to Christ, we must accept that He is our head. If we accept that He is our head, then we must accept everything that He has said regarding His church and worship. If we accept that He is our head, we can’t go back and pull something that David (who is not our head) did in the Old Testament.

This makes Colossians 3:16 mean so much more, doesn't it? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Because this is the way that Christ is functioning today as the head of the church. If we are in His church, this is the way that He will direct our lives and our worship, through His words. We find those in the New Testament.

We must be aware though of the possibility of misapplying or mishandling the Word of God, as we are warned in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The American Standard puts it, "handling aright the word of truth."

Now jurors, we know that we are to let the Words of Christ dwell within us and that we must handle it aright. So how do we handle matters when the Lord is silent about them? If we do not read a "Thou shalt not," then is it right to do that particular thing? There is not a place in the New Testament that reads, "Thou shalt not use a piano or an organ or any type of mechanical instrument of music in worship to God." So many say, "Well it doesn't tell us we can't do that." The danger is that when we start trying to build acceptable worship based on the silence of the Scriptures, we run into all kinds of difficulty.

Let's look at a biblical example of how the silence of Scripture ought to be handled. Hebrews 7 explains why there had to be a change in the law, why we had to have a new covenant. There had to be a change in the priesthood. Under the Old Testament, the Levitical system, to be a priest, one had to come from the tribe of Levi. But Hebrews 7:14 states, "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood."

When Moses gave the qualifications for being priests under the Old Law and said they had to be from the tribe of Levi, he did not say, "They shalt not be from the tribe of Judah or Simeon." So the silence did not give anyone the right to make men priests from other tribes. If Jesus was going to qualify to be a priest, there was going to have to be a new covenant, the law concerning the priesthood would have to be changed.

So let's say your mother sends you to the grocery store with a list to get a loaf of bread, a quart of milk and five pounds of sugar. Suppose you come home with a car load of groceries. When she is angry, is it going to be a good argument that she didn't tell you NOT to buy all these other groceries? I would imagine it wouldn't be.

So how do we handle aright the Word of Christ? We must understand that our Lord is going to direct us in worship to God, true worship. If He plainly explains what He wants, then that is our authority and that is our direction. When He gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” “Go and preach the gospel” is the plain instruction.

Did they go in cars, teach over the Internet or Skype to teach anyone in the New Testament? Of course not, because they didn’t have those modern conveniences. The car is simply a tool we use to carry out that command. It is not an addition to the command. That is very important to remember.

In worship, we use songbooks, lights and pews in our church buildings. Some would say that use of these is adding to the worship. Hebrews 10:25 states, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” The place where we assemble is not specified. We may meet in a home, rent a building or build one. We don’t have to place pews, put in lights or use a songbook, but most do.

Some people say that the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is just like using a songbook, lights or pews in our church buildings. The problem with this argument is that we don’t say we are singing and songbooking, or singing and pewing, do we? But if we use an instrument, we must say we are singing and playing. When we add a mechanical instrument, then we have added to what the head, which is Christ, has commanded that we do.

Jurors, Colossians 3:16 gives us our plain direction: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Our specific type of music is singing. When our Lord plainly told us what to do, how do we dare take the privilege of adding to the instruction that the head of the church has given us? If we do that, we are challenging the position of the head of the church, which is Christ. So, you are my jury, and you get to render your verdict. If Christ is the head of the church, and He has given us our instruction for worship, do we have the right to add to what He has instructed?

There is one argument that will not ever be used to justify mechanical instruments in worship. That argument is that the Lord commanded it in the New Testament. The argument that the apostles used it in the New Testament cannot be used either. Neither of these can be found in the New Testament.

We have an example of exactly what the apostles did in Acts 15: 16-25. Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison because Paul had cast out a spirit from a slave girl. Her masters had this done to them out of retaliation. Most people would have been dwelling on their pain from the beating and would be angry over this unjust act against them, but Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. They were worshipping! The other prisoners listened to them. Just imagine how sweet those prayers and songs must have sounded to have hardened criminals quietly listen to them. These men of God, who probably looked pretty bad from the beating, probably sounded like angels to the prisoners.

However, it would not be fair if we didn't point out that there is an instrument to be used in worship. It is our hearts. Colossians 3:16 says, "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Many times in our worship, we don't put enough emphasis on this. Who are we singing to? Well, to the Lord. How? It is supposed to be with grace in our hearts.

How transformed would our worship services be if our song leaders would give more thought to the songs chosen. How wonderful would our singing be if we actually sang from our hearts, not to each other, but to the Lord! After all, the worship is not about us but about pleasing God.

I rest my case, dear jurors. The verdict is up to you.

Questions

1. The first fact that the author presented to the jury was that _____ is the creator of the universe.
2. _____ means above all others, supreme and superior.
3. Colossians 3:1-2 tells us that Christ is sitting at the _____.

4. Jeremiah 31:31-34 prophesies of a _____
_____.
5. Colossians 3:16 says to sing with _____ in your
_____ to the _____.
6. True or False? The apostles used mechanical instruments in the New Testament.
7. True or False? The instrument that we are to use today is our hearts.

Discussion

8. The author discussed several arguments that people use to introduce mechanical instruments for music in worship. With regards to David from the Old Testament, explain in your own words why it is that we should not do what David did then.
9. The author discussed the use of songbooks, lights and pews in church buildings for use during worship. How is that different than using a mechanical instrument?
10. When Moses gave the command for the priests of the Old Law to come from the tribe of Levi, was it okay for priests to come from other tribes, since it was never said they couldn't? Why or why not? Why was it necessary for there to be a new covenant in order for Jesus to become a priest?
11. Name some ways that you think singing in worship can be improved based on Colossians 3:16.