

MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN SCRIPTURE

Text: Psalm 22:22

INTRO: Our text is from one of the completely Messianic psalms. This verse is quoted from the LXX translation in Heb. 2:12, "Saying, 'I will declare Your name to My brethren: In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.'" Christ has authorized congregational singing in praise to God throughout His Messianic reign.

Most likely all those in attendance are aware that churches of Christ do not use mechanical instruments of music in their worship assemblies, but we do encourage all to participate in congregational singing. For the next few minutes, we will look at some Biblical facts regarding mechanical instruments of music.

I. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC DURING THE PATRIARCHAL AGE.

A. First mentioned in Gen. 4:21: "Jubal... was the father of all those who play the harp & flute." Jubal was a direct descendent of Cain, of the 7th generation.

B. Mechanical music was used in ancient times in partying and merry-making.

1. Laban scolded Jacob: Why did you flee away secretly, & steal away from me, & not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy & songs, with timbrel & harp? (Gen 31:27).

2. Job, of the wicked people of his generation:
They send forth their little ones like a flock, & their children dance. They sing to the tambourine & harp, & rejoice to the sound of the flute. They spend their days in wealth, & in a moment go down to the grave. Yet they say to God, 'Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?' (Job 21:11-15).

3. Later, Job says of himself: My harp is turned to

mourning & my flute to the voice of those who weep. (Job 30:31).

- C. The first recorded case of mechanical music in a spiritual setting was by Miriam & the women under her leadership after the crossing of the Red Sea.

Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; & all the women went out after her with timbrels & with dances. And Miriam answered them; "Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse & its rider He has thrown into the sea." (EX 15:20-21).

II. UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES.

- A. Trumpets were frequently used by the priests to call Israel to attention. They were not commonly used to make music or to accompany singing, or for praise.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Make 2 silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the assembly & for directing the movement of the camps. When they blow both of them, all the assembly shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. But if they blow only one, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you. (Numbers 10:1-4)

- B. However trumpets & other horns were authorized in O.T. worship & were occasionally used for that purpose.

Sing to the Lord with the harp, with the harp & the sound of a psalm, with trumpets & the sound of a horn; shout joyfully before the Lord the King. (Psalm 98:5-6).

- C. When King Saul experienced moods of depression, David play music on the harp to relax & soothe his troubled mind, 1 Sam. 16:16, 23. This music apparently

was not connected with worship or praise.

- D. Also, during the time of King Saul, harps, flutes, tambourines & other instruments were used to accompany certain prophetic revelations, apparently inspired or spiritual songs.

After that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is. And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, & a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. (1 Sam 10:5).

- E. Once the tabernacle arrived in Jerusalem & all Jewish worship centered there, certain Levites were designated to play musical instruments in connection with the temple services.

Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, & of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, & cymbals...All these were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, stringed instruments, & harps for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, & Heman were under the authority of the king.
(1 Chron. 25:1, 6)

[Hezekiah] stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, & with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, & of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah commanded them to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD also began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel. (2 Chron. 29:25-26).

F. At least 13 of the Psalms make reference to mechanical music in praise to God. At least 3 of these were addressed to the chief musician--the Levite in charge of the music in the temple. It is interesting that none of these 13 psalms are quoted or alluded to in the N.T. Scriptures.

G. Of course, instrumental music continued to be used on festive occasions, not necessarily directly connected with worship.

1. Weddings, Matt. 11:17 (flute)
2. Homecomings, Luke 15:25
3. Victory parties.

When David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing & dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, & with musical instruments. So the women sang as they danced & said: "Saul has slain his thousands & David his 10 thousands." (1 Sam 18:6-7)

4. When they were moving the ark, 2 Sam 6:3-7.
The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the maidens playing timbrels. (Psalm 68:25)

III. MUSIC IN N.T. WORSHIP.

A. The instrumental music of the temple worship was clearly connected with the Levitical priesthood. 2 Chron 29:25

B. Today, the priesthood has changed; & the law has also changed, Heb. 7:12. The burning of incense & animal sacrifices (Psa 66:15), the new moons & Jewish feasts (Psa 81:3), the ceremonial washings (Psa 26:6), the mechanical music & dancing (Psa 150:4), & all other trappings of the Levitical law are no part of NT worship.

C. The only music authorized by the Scriptures in N.T. worship is speaking and singing of psalms, hymns &

spiritual songs. Eph 5:19; Col. 3:16. Not playing,
not humming, not whistling, etc.

IV. WHAT USE, IF ANY, MAY WE MAKE OF THE PSALMS OF THE O.T. IN N.T. WORSHIP?

- A. We should remember that the Psalms are a part of the O.T. Levitical system. What David did, or what Moses did, has no direct bearing on how we should praise & worship God today. Moses & David didn't make any laws for the church of Christ.
- B. But we should also remember that several of the Psalms are entirely Messianic, & many others of them teach and illustrate Divine principles that can & should be used today in harmony with the principles of N.T. worship.
- C. The book of Psalms is quoted more frequently by the inspired writers of the N.T. than any other O.T. book. N.T. preachers used the Psalms in their preaching, & N.T. Christians sang psalms in their praise to God.
- D. With regard to the 13 psalms that authorized ancient Israel to use mechanical music in praise to God, we may approach them in 3 ways:
 - 1. Some can be adapted to N.T. application.
 - 2. Verses that are not appropriate to our purposes may be omitted.
 - 3. The whole Psalm that might detract from our purpose may be omitted. Psa 149; 150. Some psalms because of sentiments of retaliation, violence, etc.

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, May 12, 1996
South Loop, Taylor, TX, June 21, 1996
Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, July 22, 2001