

Yes, why is it that the church of Christ doesn't use a piano or any other type of mechanical instrument of music when it sings praises to God? Believe me, we are asked that question a lot.

In this tract we are going to try our best to explain to you in as simple a fashion as we know how, just why it is that the sounds of organs, guitars, and other such instruments of music are not heard in our worship services. We hope that you will take the time to consider what we have to say, comparing it closely with what is written in the Bible.

WHAT IS *NOT* THE REAL REASON?

Before going any further, we want to make it clear that while mechanical instruments of music are never present in our worship assemblies, the reason for their absence is --

- *Not* that we just do not care for the musical sounds produced by mechanical instruments.
- *Not* that we do not have anyone that is able to play them.
- *Not* that we just do not have enough room in our buildings to fit them in.
- *Not* because of a tradition that we have, i.e., it is *not* the case that "we have just never used them, so we see no reason to start now."
- *Not* that we personally prefer "just singing" over singing with an instrumental accompaniment.

No, in reality none of the above factors have anything to do with our decision to abstain from using mechanical instruments of music when worshipping the Lord.

WORSHIP THAT PLEASES THE LORD

In every age of mankind's history the Lord God has wanted men to worship Him. That was true in the days of Noah and Moses, just as it is true for those of us who live after the death of Jesus. Jesus once told a woman, ". . . *the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23,24).

From this statement of Jesus we learn that there is such a concept as "*true worshippers*," implying that there is also such a thing as "true worship." That does not mean, however, that every form of worship that a person might offer to God will be pleasing in His sight. God rejected Cain's worship (Genesis 4), just as He did the worship of two priests who were the sons of Aaron (Leviticus 10). Jesus also said, "*Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Mark 7:7). Thus, it is possible for worship to be in vain, i.e., not achieving the desired goal, which is to please God.

Concerning worship that *is* acceptable to the God of heaven, Jesus' statement that we quoted above from John 4:23,24 also shows that true worship is characterized in these three ways:

- (1) It is offered to ***the right object*** -- "*God*."
- (2) It is offered in ***the right attitude*** from the heart -- "*in spirit*."
- (3) It is offered according to ***the right standard*** -- "*in truth*." Since Jesus called God's word "*truth*" (John 17:17), then worship that is offered "*in truth*" will be according to the teachings of God's word, the Bible.

As we consider the matter of using or not using mechanical instruments of music (abbreviated "M.I.M.") when we sing and worship the Lord God, the question to which we will be pursuing an answer is basically this one: Is the use of such instruments according to God's truth? If so, then there is no problem in using them. On the other hand, if we do not find scriptural statements that authorize their use, then using them would not be according to His truth, and thus unscriptural. Let's look further.

WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DOES GOD AUTHORIZE IN THE WORSHIP OF CHRISTIANS?

The question to consider is not, "What kind of music do other people use in their worship?" Pleasing God is not about acting "like everybody else." Remember, Jesus taught that true, God-pleasing worship must be "*in truth*" (John 4:23,24).

Just what does God desire or command when it comes to the type of music that Christians should

use in their worship to Him? If we are going to find His will in this matter, then we will have to turn to the scriptures. More specifically, we will have to turn to the New Testament scriptures. Why should our appeal be to the New Testament? Because Jesus gave this charge for all men everywhere: "*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28:20). Actions that please the Lord God must be according to the teachings of Christ. Again, it is written that in order for a person to enjoy the fellowship of both the Father and the Son, he must "*abide in the doctrine of Christ*" (2 John 9). Thus, our lives, including our worship, must be based on the teachings of Christ.

Below are the New Testament verses that speak of Jesus' followers praising God through music:

- "*And when they had sung an hymn, they went out . . .*" (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).
- "*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God . . .*" (Acts 16:25).
- ". . . *I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name*" (Romans 15:9).
- ". . . *I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also*" (1 Cor. 14:15).
- "*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:19).
- ". . . *teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*" (Col. 3:16).
- ". . . *in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee*" (Hebrews 2:12).
- ". . . *Is any merry? let him sing psalms*" (Jas. 5:13).

The truth is, neither these passages just quoted nor any other references in the New Testament make mention of Christians using M.I.M. when singing praises to God. The above-noted verses point out that the first century followers of Christ sang praises to the Lord: these passages make mention of *singing, but not singing with mechanical accompaniment*. In fact, the first time on record when those that called themselves "Christians"

made use of M.I.M. in worship to God was in about the year A.D. 670 – that was some 600 years after the New Testament was written.

Sometimes people say to us, “Oh, you’re the ones that don’t have music.” *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines “music” as “the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination . . . vocal, instrumental, or mechanical sounds, having rhythm, melody, or harmony.” Since by definition “vocal sounds” qualify as music, then, yes, in the worship services of the church of Christ we *do* have music. What kind? The same kind of music which the New Testament says was present in the worship of the first century church – singing.

Why doesn’t the church of Christ use M.I.M. in its worship? Simply because there is no New Testament authority for it. If using such instruments is “in truth,” then where is the verse in Christ’s truth that mentions such? There is none. There is no New Testament record of the Lord *commanding* us to use mechanical instruments as we sing praises. There is no New Testament *example* of the first century church doing such. Nor is there any *direct statement* or *implication* in the New Testament that such instruments must be, ought to be, or may be used in worship. Therefore, the bottom line is this: to use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God is to act without divine authority. That is why we refrain from using them in the church of Christ.

SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

“But God’s people in the Old Testament used mechanical instruments of music when they praised God.” Yes, they did. However the Bible declares that the old law was abolished when Jesus died, meaning that its instructions were no longer in force after His death (Ephesians 2:14,15; Colossians 2:14). Thus, our worship today is not based upon the teachings of the Old Testament. Israelites of the Old Testament age also burned incense, offered animal sacrifices, and went to Jerusalem to celebrate annual feasts. Are we prepared to say that *all of these things that God’s children did in the Old Testament worship are acceptable today?* Surely not. If we go back to the Old Testament for our religious practices today, then we would be obligated to keep *“the whole law,”* not just certain portions of it! (Gal. 5:2).

“But there is no verse where God forbids us to use M.I.M. like pianos and organs.” There is no verse that reads, “Do not use M.I.M. in worship.” However, our worship to God must be based on what God *has* stated in the scriptures (*“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God,”* 1 Peter 4:11), not on what He *has not* stated. What about adding chocolate cake to the Lord’s Supper? Is there any New Testament command that directly forbids such? No. Why, then, would it be wrong to add chocolate cake to the communion? Simply because there is no New Testament authority for such action. The same goes for the use of M.I.M. in worship.

“But the singing sounds so much better when it is accompanied with mechanical instruments. If such instruments help our singing, then surely God would not be against using them.” If we say that M.I.M. make our singing “sound better,” then we wonder, sound better *to whom*, sound better to God, or to the ears of men? When we worship, just whom are we striving to please? Isn’t it supposed to be God? Absolutely! And when we sing from the heart (Colossians 3:16), regardless of how it might sound to men, the Lord is pleased. Remember, worship is not a performance or entertainment for men’s pleasure. Worship is to be directed to our Creator. Thus, acceptable worship is not about what “sounds better” to us, but about acting by a *“thus saith the Lord.”* If the use of M.I.M. is justified because they make singing *sound* better, then by the same reasoning it would be alright to add BBQ to the Lord’s Supper because it would “improve” *the taste*. “Oh no, adding BBQ would be out of place.” But why? Simply because the New Testament nowhere authorizes the use of BBQ as part of the communion. The same is true for the use of M.I.M. in worship: there is no New Testament authority for such, so their use in the worship of Christians stands as a practice designed by men and not the Lord.

We leave you with this parting thought. The use of M.I.M. in worship to God is without New Testament authority. That, and that alone, is the reason why the church of Christ does not use them in its worship to God. Our plea to you is for you to seriously consider this question: *“What does the Bible say* about the matter that we’ve discussed?”

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WHY DOESN'T THE CHURCH OF CHRIST USE MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP TO GOD?

