

SINGING

The Christian religion is a singing religion. Singing is another one of the acts of worship recorded in the New Testament. In this brief study, we want to take a close look at this very important part of worship.

First of all, we want to notice the various verses of scripture that deal with this subject:

1. *"And when they had sung an hymn: they went out into the mount of Olives"* (Matthew 26:30).
2. *"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them"* (Acts 16:25).
3. *"And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written. For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name"* (Romans 15:9).
4. *"...I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also"* (I Corinthians 14:15).
5. *"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:19).
6. *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual song, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* (Colossians 3:16).
7. *"Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee"* (Hebrews 2:12).
8. *"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms"* (James 5:13).
9. *"And they sung a new song..."* (Revelation 5:9).
10. *"And they sung as it were a new song before the throne..."* (Revelation 14:3).
11. *"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb..."* (Revelation 15:3).

Now in all of the pages of the New Testament, these are the only verses that deal with the subject of singing. It would appear then that it is quite clear as to what the Lord wants in this respect. Anything more or less would not be in keeping with his word.

To most religious people singing suggests music and music suggests mechanical music. Therefore, the majority of the religious groups have mechanical music to accompany their singing. But while all can agree that the New Testament teaches that we should have singing in our worship services, all cannot agree that mechanical music should also be included. But what does the Bible say? Does it teach singing only or that mechanical music is also to be used in worship? Is it possible to worship without mechanical music? Is it possible to worship with it? Is it possible to do either? Let us see.

We will notice first of all that there are two kinds of music known to man: vocal and mechanical. Vocal music is produced by the vocal cords of a human being. It therefore comes from within the individual. It is alive. It comes from God's own creation. Therefore it has been said that the most beautiful music in all the world comes from the blending of the sounds that comes from human voices. Mechanical music is just the opposite. It is mechanical. The instrument has been made by man. It is cold, lifeless, spiritless, and heartless. And the only reason that it makes sounds is because someone beats on it, plucks its strings, or blows into it, depending on the type of instrument it is. God did not make it as such, but rather it is an invention of man. It is a substitute. Now which would God prefer? The Hebrew writer says, *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name"* (Hebrews 13:15).

Well known religious leaders through the years have not advocated mechanical music in worship, but singing as the Bible teaches. Let us observe some of their statements:

1. John Wesley: "I have no objection to instruments of music, in our chapels, provided they are neither heard or seen" (Clark's Commentary, Vol. IV, p. 686.).
2. John Calvin: "Musical instrument in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, the restoration of the others shadows of the law. The Baptists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews" (John Calvin's Commentary, Thirty-Third Psalm).
3. Martin Luther: He called it "the organ an ensign of Baal" (McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia, Music, Vol. VI, p. 762).
4. Adam Clarke: "Music as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I regis-

# THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

*"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..."* (Amos 7:8)

**THE LORD'S INVITATION**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. Come To \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

II. Come For \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

III. Come And \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

**VICTORY IN JESUS**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. He Reminds them of Christ's \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

II. He Reminds them of Churches' \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

III. He Reveals to them Christians' \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

ter my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity" (Clark's Commentary, Vol. IV, p. 686).

There are many other Bible scholars who have likewise spoken out against mechanical instruments of music in worship. But there did it all begin? With the Catholic Church, and inasmuch as the denominations have come out of the Catholic Church then the majority have brought their mechanical music with them.

Many of the denominational people try to justify mechanical music as follows:

1. They say that David used it. That may be true but we must remember that David lived under one law and we live under another. We cannot do what David did just because he did it. If so we will have to go back to Jerusalem once a year to offer animal sacrifices, etc. Remember those that go back to David for mechanical music only return to him for that, and perhaps a few other things, but they don't want all that David had. But read John 1:17; II Corinthians 3; Hebrews 10:9, etc.
2. They say that it doesn't say not to have them. But it doesn't say not to have a lot of things in worship. It does say though what to have, and it does say to sing (Ephesians 5:19). That eliminates the other.
3. They say that there is nothing wrong with it. There may not be anything wrong with having mechanical music in the home, in weddings, for entertainment, etc., but for worship it is different. It would be wrong to add it to the worship when the Lord did not command it (Revelation 22:18-19).
4. They say that it aids our worship. Then why didn't the Lord command it? But I suggest to you that it is not an aid but it actually becomes a part of the worship when used. This is not in keeping with the scriptures.
5. They say that there will be music in heaven. The scriptures do not teach instrumental music in heaven. Even if it did, that wouldn't justify using it. There will be many things in heaven we cannot have in worship now.
6. They say that they like it. Well, I like cake and soft drink, but does that mean that I can have it in worship? The question is not, do we like it, but does the Lord want it?

So when we gather on the Lord's day for worship we are to praise the Lord through our singing. This is to be done in spirit and in truth. Therefore, we must sing with all understanding and in all sincerity. We are also to sing according to the scriptures, and that means praising the Lord through vocal music. Not only so, but the songs themselves are to be scriptural and spiritual in content.

The Bible teaches congregational singing. That is, we are all to blend our voices in the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Through these songs we praise God, teach on another, and edify and encourage one another to be faithful to the Lord. How wonderful it is to sing such songs, unfettered by the noises and disturbances of mechanical instruments, but with reverence, peace, and serenity of our souls to lift our voices in common praise to the God of heaven. What could be more fitting? What could be more inspirational? This is what God wants.

*-J.C. Choate*

**THE BOOK OF ETERNAL VICTORY**

The Revelation of John, the final book of the Bible, is the single most misunderstood and perverted book in all of the sacred scriptures. Its purpose, background, and language is largely ignored in order to promote an agenda that has profited many in the religious and entertainment world billions of dollars. However, regardless of how profitable and widespread the errors taught from a confused outlook of Revelation, this book does not teach nor support the rapture, the war of Armageddon, the thousand year reign, or the earthly kingdom theories so popularly promoted by the fatal doctrine of dispensational premillennialism. Rather this book promotes a single message which is the victory of Christ and those who are in Christ. That essentially is it. Now, the reason most of the world is confused by the book and what it is realistically teaching is because of how it is written. The opening verse of the book reveals a significant truth about the remainder of the book: “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and **signified** it by his angel unto his servant John*” (Revelation 1:1). Two things of significance from that verse come to mind. First, the word “Revelation.” It is not just the name of the book, but it is a description of what is written. The word originally was “*apokalupsis*” or “apocalypse,” as it is transliterated. This word literally means “something not concealed; an uncovering, a laying bare, making naked.” And as Winton stated: “The book uncovers (unveils) by the use of symbols, signs, imagery, and visions. It seeks to prepare the people for the persecutions that were then impending.” Well it might be asked, “why not just come out and say it rather than masking the words?” Apocalyptic language, when it was used throughout the Bible, was used for particular reasons. It protected the writer and readers from their enemies and it hid the message from those enemies, but revealed it clearly to those who loved the truth. Thus, the title of the book indicates its purpose of using a language that could not be interpreted literally because that would defy its very purpose. Then, second, the word “signified” indicates a similar point. The book is filled with signs and symbols that must be interpreted as such, not literal figures. So from the very outset, John explains what is about to be read so that his readers would know that its contents would have to be interpreted accordingly.

Christianity in Rome had practically turned into an outlawed religion. It was not the religion, necessarily, in and of itself, but rather the dedication of Christians to Christianity that made it that which was outlawed. Domitian, the ruler of Rome at the time, enjoyed being deified and worshiped, and because committed Christians refused to submit to his expectations, they were prone to persecutions of all degrees at any time. And these persecutions often resulted in deaths of the most brutal type. Thus, given the hostile environment in which first century Christians had to live and serve, many were tempted to give it up and compromise with Rome’s religious demands placed upon them. Because of such a mentality, John writes to encourage them not to give in, but to withstand because in the end, victory would be theirs’. As Johnny Ramsey wrote:

“Looking earnestly for a city with everlasting foundations (Hebrews 11:10) made life in the evil Roman Empire more bearable for loyal servants of Christ. If you had been a Christian in a prison cell in Rome in the last decade of the first century and realized that persecution and death hovered over you, would not a message of hope, comfort, and victory have been a blessing to your soul? Such a treatise is the brilliant closing refrain of Scripture known as Revelation.”

Generally speaking, the book of Revelation can be broken up into three sections that help in understanding its overall structure. First, in Revelation 1, John discusses things that had been seen. In that chapter, he refers to the power and authority of Jesus Christ to which they should submit to ensure their victory. Second, John refers to things that were currently occurring, specifically among seven congregations of Asia Minor, in Revelation 2-3. The churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea each uniquely represent certain reactions to Rome’s demands at that time. And each congregations activities received a response by Christ to indicate His pleasure or displeasure with them. Then third, in Revelation 4-22, John expounds on things that were to be. Persecutions would persist and suffering would not subside, but ultimately the judgment would come and the righteous Savior would take His faithful home, to Heaven pictured by unspeakable beauty and glory.

The Bible is the song of redemption, and the book of Revelation serves as the final stanza of triumph. Sin will be vanquished, Satan will be defeated, and souls will be saved according to the divine promise. “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20b).

-Andy Brewer