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Pleading for the restoration of pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL



Easter

The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible says: "Originally the Spring Festival in honour of the Teutonic goddess of light and spring known in Anglo-Saxon as Eostre. As early as the 8th century the name was transferred by the Anglo-Saxons to the Christian festival designed to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. In A.V. it occurs once (Acts 12:4), but is a mistranslation. The original is Pascha, the ordinary Greek word for passover, R.S.V. properly employs the word "Passover". In fact, K.J.V. of the Bible is the only translation where the word Easter appears, though only once. All other versions or translations of the Bible clearly and rightly state it to be the Passover. The word for Passover in Greek is Pascha and in Hebrew it is Pesah, and means to passover, in sense of sparing. Passover was known also as the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, (Exodus 23:15), and it was instituted in Egypt to commemorate the culminating event in the deliverance of the Israelites, when God smote all the first born in the land of Egypt, but passed over the houses of the Israelites where the blood of a lamb was sprinkled. (Exodus 12).

March 1989

1

Historically speaking, the word Easter is derived from Eostre, the name of the goddess of dawn of the Pagans, who celebrated the festival of spring when the nature was in resurrection after winter. The Jewish Passover is celebrated at approximately the same season as Eostre. Influenced by the Pagans and Jewish celebrations of Eostre and Passover at the same time, Christians began to celebrate the resurrection of Christ as Easter. Easter, in fact, is a religious observance of human origin unauthorised by God.

Secular history also recognizes the fact that Christ was born and that He lived. Remarkably, all dates point to either prior to His coming on earth, as B.C., that is, before Christ, or to A.D., which means in the year of our Lord. Whether a person believes in Christ or not, but when he writes a date he admits that he is living in the year of our Lord. However, in spite of this there is no fixed date given in the Scriptures as to the exact date of His birth. We likewise know that Christ was crucified on a cross and that He died, and the Scriptures tell us that on the third day, after His death on the cross, He came forth from the grave in which He was buried, and that was a first day of the week. (Matthew 28:1-10). But, no specific date is given for all of this. In regard to both the Lord's birth and His resurrection, the month, the day, and the year are noticeably missing in the Scriptures. Surely, we are told that He was resurrected on the first day of the week, which is our Sunday. But, which first day of the week? We are not informed. Was it first, second, third, or fourth? The Scriptures are silent on this.

Now, somewhere between the birth of Jesus Christ and today, man has invented a date not only for his birth but also for His resurrection from the dead. But the great question is, Why were those dates not recorded in the Bible for us. Did the Holy Spirit of God, who inspired the writers of the Scriptures to write everything in them for us, forget to tell us about those dates? Surely, something that important would not have been overlooked or forgotten by God. Why then the Bible does not tell us about the day Christ was born and about the day He was resurrected from the dead? The answer is, simply because God knows that how

easy it is for man to pick up something and idolize it. This is the same reason why God did not let us have a picture of Christ. God knows man better than man himself. He does not want man to worship days or things or images, but He wants us to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. He does not want us to worship Him and remember Him only on certain days of the year, but He desires that we remember Him and worship Him every day, the year around.

Now, does that mean that we should not believe in the birth of Christ and in His resurrection from the dead? No, certainly not. We must believe that Christ came to live on earth, and that He did many great things and taught many wonderful lessons, and that finally He was betrayed because of envy of some people, He was crucified, He died on the cross by the will of God and became propitiation for the sins of the world. We must also believe that by the power of God He was resurrected from the dead on the third day after His death, and that He will come again on the appointed day of God to judge the world in righteousness.

The question however, is not whether one should believe or not in Christ's birth, and death, and resurrection. These facts cannot be denied, they are there to be believed. The Bible tells us the beautiful story of Christ's birth. (Matthew 1:18-24; 2:1-14; Luke 2:1-20). We also read, how He was, by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, betrayed and crucified for the sins of the world. (Matthew 26; Acts 2:23, 24). And the story of His resurrection is found in Matthew 28:1-25; Mark 16:1-13. The question, however, is this: does the Bible tell us when, in which month and on what date was Christ born, and likewise in what month and on what date He was crucified and resurrected? NO. The Bible nowhere tells us about the month or about a certain date on which Christ was born or was raised from the dead. Again, is there any example in the Bible where we read that early Christians celebrated Christmas or Easter? No. No, again. Then why should we do them now?

On the last page of our Bible we read this warning: "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this

book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Revelation 22:18,19). The Apostle Paul wrote: "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years, I am afraid for you, lest I have laboured for you in vain." (Galatians 4:10,11). Who are you going to obey? God or man?

The Keys Of The Kingdom

J.C. Choate

All of us know what a key is. Most of us have many of them. We use them to lock and unlock things, like houses, cars, scooters, valuables, and numerous other things. They are used for entry purposes and also to keep people out.

The Bible also speaks of keys. The most famous ones are the keys of the kingdom. (Matthew 16:16-19).

The church in God's word is called the house of God. (I Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6). A house would have a door and a door would have a lock on it. To get in and out through that door one would need a key to open the lock on that door. When it comes to the Lord's kingdom, the house of God, the sheepfold, the church, Christ said that he was the door and the way to heaven. (John 10:7; John 14:6).

The church is called the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Christ. (Colossians 1:13). This kingdom has keys, which means that when they are properly used that they can be the means of opening the door to the kingdom or church, and this in turn makes it possible for one or more to enter into it.

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples or apostles what the world thought of him. They explained that some thought he was John the Baptist, Jeremias, or one of the other prophets. Now you will note that the Lord was taking a poll here. He wanted to find out what the people of the world thought of him. Of course he was a prophet, but not an earthly prophet as some thought. Herod had beheaded John, and for one, he thought that Christ was John resurrected from the dead. This, and other beliefs concerning Christ, was false, So then Christ turned to his apostles, those who had been with him, those who had seen his miracles and had heard his teachings, and asked them what they thought of him. Peter then spoke up on behalf of himself and the other apostles, and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Lord was pleased with this acknowledgement and responded by saying, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:13-18).

Before continuing, we need to point out several things just here. In the first place, many would place great significance on the fact that it was Peter who spoke up to confess Christ as the Son of God. It should be pointed out, however, that Peter was a leader of leaders and this is a good example of it. Although Peter spoke up, he was voicing the convictions of all of the apostles. Had this not been the case, they would have surely made their voices heard. In the second place, when Christ declared his intention to build his church upon a rock, it was not Peter that he was having reference to, but himself. Peter was but a pebble but Christ was a rock, a sure foundation. Christ was but saying that Peter's information had not come from some worldly source or from the wisdom of men, but from the Father in heaven. Peter and the apostles had been with Christ, had seen his miracles, and had seen him practice what he preached. They were convinced then that Christ was the Son of God and confessed such publicly. Christ then said that he was going to build his church upon that confession, that is, that he was the Son of

God. The church was built on that fact and rests upon that fact even to this day. Paul spoke of Christ as being the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11) and the rock. (1 Corinthians 10:4). Peter quoted Isaiah's prophecy that Christ would be the chief corner stone. (1 Peter 2:6; Isaiah 28:16). No, Peter was not to be the head of the church or the foundation of the church. He was a man and made mistakes even though he was a follower of Christ and an apostle. Only Christ could be the head of the church and the foundation of it, and that he was and is.

Finally, Christ said to Peter and the apostles, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19). Again, there are those who are just as sure as they can be that since Christ was speaking to Peter, and he promised the keys to him, that surely he, and he alone, was given those keys. If you should go to Rome and other places where there are great sculptures and paintings depicting Peter then you would see that he has been portrayed as having the symbolic keys of the kingdom. It is true that Peter received the keys of the kingdom, but so did the other apostles, and many others since that time, as we are going to see. Peter, as well as the other apostles, were important to Christ only as they followed the Lord and carried out his will. They held no higher position than that.

On turning to Acts 2 we have the apostles in Jerusalem and there they are baptized with the Holy Spirit. This makes it possible for them to remember all that Jesus had taught them, to be directed in all truth, to be able to speak in other languages, and to perform miracles to convince the people that they had been sent of God to proclaim his will. They therefore preached Christ to all of those gathered on the day of Pentecost, and as a result, a large number asked what else they should do. We read, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). Continuing, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized:"

and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Finally, we are told, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47). Now what happened here? We have Peter and the apostles using the keys that the Lord had promised to open the doors of the kingdom or church. Being guided by the Holy Spirit, they told the people what they should do to be saved, and when they obeyed the Lord, he saved them and added them to the church. What they taught there, or bound, was also bound in heaven and has been handed down to us in written form, and that means that it is still binding. Furthermore, that which was loosed, or not bound, the same is loosed in heaven, and is therefore not required of man today. For instance, the law, and things binding before Christ, were loosed and continues so to this day. How blessed we are to have had the keys of the kingdom, a knowledge of what the Lord requires of one to be saved, passed on down to us through the pages of the New Testament.

In spite of God's will, and the clear and simple truths that he has imparted through that will, there are still those who are binding all kinds of teachings upon their fellowman in the name of Christ. Many also go through the scriptures and loose numerous truths and commands that God has required of his creation. How sad it will be for those who are binding and loosing things without the authority of Christ. We are commanded not to add, substitute when it comes to God's word. (Revelation 22:18, 19: Galatians 1:7-9).

The keys of the kingdom are made known to us through the scriptures, that is, it is through the teaching of God's word that we may learn what the Lord wants us to do to be saved and to enter his kingdom, the church. We may learn these truths through a personal study of the Bible or through hearing the word of God faithfully proclaimed. If we will then submit ourselves to those teachings by believing them and obeying them, then the Lord has promised to saved us and add us to the church. If we choose to remain ignorant of God's will, allow false teachers to deceive us, or if we refuse to obey the truth once we have learned it, then the kingdom or church will remain closed

to us and as such we cannot be saved. The Lord is coming back one day for his kingdom so that he might present it to God, but if we are not in it then that means that we cannot be eternally saved.

With a knowledge of God's will, and in obedience to it, we not only have the keys that open the kingdom to us, and other keys pertaining to worship, the Christian life, etc., but we are to use those keys, that is, a knowledge of God's will, to tell others what they should do to enter the Lord's kingdom. To withhold such information is in substance to close the doors of the kingdom to them. This would be a crime against God and humanity.

Do you know God's will? Have you obeyed it? Are you in the Lord's kingdom, the church? If you are, are you using the keys of the kingdom to make it possible for numerous souls not only to enter the kingdom in this present world, but that they also one day may enter through the gate into the holy city of God? May God help us to get as many in as we can while we can.

What Was It Like Before Denomination?

G.F. Raines

The word of God plainly teaches that it is of eternal importance that we "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11) and abide in the doctrine of Christ. (2 John 9.)

If people now would do just what the doctrine of Christ enjoins—no more and no less— they would not become members of religious sects or denominations. All denominations are the result of human opinions; therefore, to belong to one, a man would have to go beyond or stop short of the doctrine of Christ.

Paul says that our "faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:5.)

In the second chapter of Acts of Apostles, we are told that Peter preached Christ to a great multitude of Jews in Jerusalem "out of every nation under heaven." His preaching pierced the hearts of many who sincerely inquired, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (37.) Peter replied: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (38.) "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." (41.) "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (47.)

By simple obedience to the gospel of Christ, "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16), the penitent believers became members of the Lord's church, but they did not become members of any denomination. The same obedience—no more and no less—puts all who thus obey into the Lord's church, but not into any sect or denomination.

"When any religious group adheres strictly to the divine rule of faith and practice—the word of God—and refuses to accept any man as authority; when its member have become such by meeting the same requirements that made men members of the church in the New Testament; when they hold faithfully to the organization that featured the New Testament church; when they worship according to the simple form of worship revealed in the New Testament church: then that group of people must constitute the church that Jesus authorized. It is the church of the New Testament—the exclusive New Testament church." (W. Curtis Portor.).

The apostle Paul, knowing that "there should be no schism in the body," (1 Corinthians 12:25), admonished the disciples at Corinth as follows:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be

no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1:10.)

The Sabbath Day

Johnny Ramsey

Unless you understand the dodges perpetrated by Sabbath-keepers, you will be in the dark as to the full significance of the matter under discussion at this time. God said of the law in Col. 2:14, "He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." And in Eph. 2:11-17, God affirms that Christ broke down and abolished "the middle wall of partition... even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" that separated Jew and Greek. Such passages cause the advocates of Sabbath worship to invent in their own minds a distinction between the ceremonial and the moral law. The moral law, which they style "the law of God," contained the Sabbath commandment and they say it was not nailed to cross with the rest of the law. But the ceremonial law, arbitrarily called "the law of Moses," was that which was abrogated. Friends, the Bible reveals nothing of such a manmade idea, we will use just there of many passages we could call forth to prove that the law of God and the law of Moses refer to the same thing.

(1) In Neh. 8:1, God tells us, "And they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel." Notice that "law of Moses" is that law which was given by God to Israel through Moses.

(2) In Lk. 2:22-24 we read of the rites of purification, which our Sabbath keeping friends call the ceremonial part of the law, hence "the law of Moses." But Luke, by inspiration, uses the terms "law of Moses" and "law of the Lord" interchangeably, as he calls the offering of two turtle-doves "the law of the Lord" (v. 24) and "the law of Moses" (v. 22).

(3) Many Jews who became Christians tried to bind the old law on the Gentiles. The brethren came together in Jerusalem to combat this idea, and the meeting is recorded in Acts 15. The Pharisees said, "It was needful to circumcize them and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (v. 5). According to those who make the unwarranted difference between the law of God and the law of Moses, circumcision belonged to Moses' law. But Acts 15:5 refutes that.

Yes, I can prove by the Bible that the Sabbath commandment was taken away with the rest of the old covenant. Rom. 7:1-7 informs us that the covenant which said, "Thou shalt not covet" is the covenant we have become dead to by the death of Christ. But what law said, "Thou shalt not covet"? The ten commandment law, given at Sinai, Ex. 20! And, friends, that is the same law that said, "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy."

The apostle Paul, writing about the giving to the old law in 2 Cor. 3, makes a strong point concerning the veil that is upon our hearts when we turn back to Moses. He shows that the old law was written "on tables of stone" but the new law is written "in tables that are hearts of flesh" (v. 3). When the ten commandments, written on tables of stone, were delivered by Moses to Israel, his face shined so that the people had him put a veil upon it (v. 7,13; see also Ex. 34). Of this old testament, Paul writes that it is "done away in Christ" (v. 14). He is speaking clearly of the law written on tables of stone, when Moses put on the veil; that can only be the ten commandment law. This is the covenant that is "abolished" (Eph. 2:15), "done away" (2 Cor. 3:14), "nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:14) and "fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18; Gal. 3:19-28).

Jesus was raised "early on the first day of the week" (Mk. 16:9) His church was established on the first day of the week, the Pentecost after His death (see Lev. 23:15 and Acts 2). The early disciples "came together on the first day of the week to break bread" (Acts 20:7). And the Lord commands us to "lay by in store on the first day of the week" (1 Cor. 16:2). We meet together on the first day of the week for worship because there is no command for Christians to meet on any other day for divine

worship! The Sabbath was never binding on the New Testament church. To go back to the Old Covenant is to foolishly accept a shadow when we can partake of the substance (Heb. 10:1). To go back to Moses and the law God gave through him (Neh. 8:1) is to ignore the fact that Christ died to abolish that law (Eph. 2:11-16; 2 Cor. 3:7-17). It is folly to abide by such a system of bondage (Gal. 4:24; 5:1) when we should enjoy the freedom in Christ's Perfect law (Gal. 5:1, 13; Jas. 1:25). To go back to that old law nullifies the grace of God (Gal. 5:4).

Who changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday? Not the Pope, not Constantine—but Jesus Christ. by His death upon the cross (Col. 2:14) and His resurrection (Mk. 16:9). The Lord's inspired apostles verified this truth: read Acts 20-7! Jesus said 1900 years before Smith, White, Russel or Eddy ever came upon the scene that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all the truth (Jno. 16:13). We definitely believe that the Holy Spirit accomplished His divine purpose. Do you?

'What Manner Of Persons?'

David M. Dunn

Critical questions are not lacking in Scripture. The Bible was written to rational people in logical terms to stimulate their thinking and in turn to affect their living. Perhaps, for Christians, the most significant question ever asked is that posed by Peter in his second epistle. "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be?" (2 Peter 3:11.). The apostle's theme in the last chapter of his second letter is the return of the Savior. Mockers were spreading seeds of doubt among the believers were spreading seeds of doubt among the believers concerning the second advent. "Where is the promise of his coming?" they were sarcastically asking. (Verse 4.). In response Peter spends the remainder of his writing space reaffirming the *certainty* of Jesus' coming, the *manner* of his coming, and the *challenge* of his coming.

Regarding the *certainty* of Jesus' return Peter reasons that it is not slackness that accounts for the Lord's delay, but patience. (Verse 9.). We must not think that God has forgotten his promise to end the world, judge the wicked, and reward the righteous. Rather, we must believe that he is patiently waiting for men to repent. Regarding the *manner* of Jesus' return Peter says, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief." (Verse 10). The thief metaphor, common in the New Testament, cautions us against apathy on the one hand and fanaticism on the other. While we must not treat Jesus' return as though it were unimportant, neither should we become so preoccupied with it that our day-to-day Christian responsibilities are ignored. Regardless, when Jesus comes "as a thief" he will come with destruction. (Verses 7, 10.). Both the material universe and ungodly mankind will suffer the wrath of God on that day. With that Peter turns to the *challenge* of Jesus' return. Christian doctrine cannot be divorced from Christian ethics. What we believe must affect how we live. So he asks, "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be?" (Verse 11.). In other words, "Since Jesus is coming, how should we live?" In the verses that remain of his letter the apostle answers that great question.

1. We ought to be *expectant* people. Three times in three verses Peter uses a phrase translated "looking for." It implies desire on the one hand and expectation on the other. We are "*looking* for and earnestly desiring the coming day of God." (Verse 12.) "*We look for* new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (Verse 13.). Then he adds, "seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight." (Verse 14.) Today we would say, "We look forward to Jesus' return." The Bible closes with the wonderful plea, "Come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20.). For those who are prepared for the coming of the Lord is an occasion not only to expect, but one we may even desire.

2. We ought to be *righteous* people. "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" (Verse

11.). The word "holy" connotes separation from common use for divine use. We must be active in his service as we await his coming. The word "godliness" suggests God-like living. The Christian virtues we are to add to our faith sum up the godly life. (2 Peter 1:5-7.). In verse 14 Peter adds, "give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight." The sacrificial lamb of the Old Testament is in view here. It was to be "without blemish." (Leviticus 22:17-24.). Jesus' desire for the church is "that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:27.) What he desires for the church he also desires for each of its members. As we await his return we must become righteous people.

3. We ought to be *cautious* people. Peter warns of false teachers who "wrest" the scriptures. (Verse 16.) So he says, "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness." (Verse 17.) Between the Savior's appearances, while the true gospel is being preached, false gospels are also spread. (Galatians 1:6-9.). They represent a serious threat to the "stedfastness" of Christians. Consequently it is in our own best interest spiritually that we be cautious as we hear messages offered in Jesus' name and "prove" them "whether they are of God." (1 John 4:1.)

4. We ought to be *growing* people. Peter closes his second letter with this appeal. "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." (Verse 18.) We must "as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation." (Peter 1:2.) That "spiritual milk of course is God's word". (Hebrews 5:12-14). Just as a child would die without his physical nourishment, so a Christian will die spiritually without spiritual nourishment. Starvation is as much a threat to our stedfastness as is the poison of the false teachers of verses 16 and 17.

If we are growing people, some wonderful things result.

First, we develop the discernment necessary to evaluate what we hear. Second, we are transformed into righteous people. Third, we have every reason not only to expect but even to long for Jesus' coming. He is coming. Therefore, "What manner of persons ought ye to be?"

Authorized Music For New Testament Worship

Kevin L. Jenkins

When one considers how his life is to be governed in matters of religion or religious service to God, the source of authority in these matters must be established. With regards to Christianity there can be only one source of authority which is to govern this and that is the New Testament scripture. When we attempt to determine what is or what is not acceptable as being authorized by God the scriptures become the "voice" of authority as they alone are the inspired word of God. Opinion loses its power if opposed or unsupported by scripture.

Over the years the church of Christ has stood firm in its conviction that the scriptures do authorize vocal music in worship to God and that this position can be supported from scripture. However, the use of instrumental music in worship to God cannot be found to be authorized in the New Testament scriptures, nor can there be found an example of the New Testament church engaging in such in its worship service. Instrumental music in itself is not improper. Only when it is used in relationship with church worship do we find a problem in its use. Why? Because it is never commanded for exemplified for use in the worship of the New Testament church.

Reasons to Sing

The matter really becomes quite simple when considered from this viewpoint. The purpose of singing is clearly defined. First,

as Christians we are commanded to sing: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God." (Colossians 3:16.)

Paul's command to the church was to teach and admonish one another by singing.

Another purpose of our singing is to praise and glorify God: "...Singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:19.). The Lord is to be the object of our praise through song.

Another reason to sing is for joy: "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise." (James 5:13.). The joy of salvation should stir our souls to sing. We also need to know how to sing. Does God want only vocal music? Does he want vocal music accompanied by an instrument, or does it really matter? The key is, what do the scriptures say?

Instrumental Music in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament it is quite obvious that instrumental music was authorized and participated in worship to God. One passage, among many, that points this fact out is: "And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps...for so was the commandment of the Lord...and Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering...and when the burnt offering began the song of the Lord began also . . . and all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. (2 Chronicles 29:25-28).

This passage makes it crystal clear that God approved of instrumental music in the Old Testament worship. However, this was for a worship service conducted under the Old Covenant, the Old Law of Moses which has since been done away with in Christ. (2 Corinthians 3:14; Romans 7:4-6.). This same passage also authorizes the offering of a burnt offering. Those who would

try to use this Old Testament passage to authorize instrumental music in a New Testament worship service would also be forced to accept the offering of a burnt offering if they are to be consistent.

As a matter of fact, in each reference to music in the New Testament with regard to the church and its worship, the only reference is to vocal music. There is *not even one command or example of instrumental music in the worship service* of the New Testament church. If in the Old Testament, the use and authorization of instrumental music was so obvious and plain as in the above cited passage, isn't it a bit strange that if God was indifferent to instrumental music in worship there is not even one command for its use or even one example of its use?

Vocal Music in the New Testament

What is obvious in each New Testament passage in the command to sing. Some use the argument, "Well command for example of instrumental music becomes an exclusive command. By commanding vocal music he has excluded all others. The same principle is true concerning the emblems of the Lord's Supper. By directing the use of the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, Jesus excluded anything else to be used. He did not have to say, "Do not use fish," or "Do not use milk," or "Do not use anything else." By stating what to use he automatically excluded everything else. By directing us to sing all other forms of music are excluded.

Evidence From History

It is also interesting to note that from the historical standpoint, most all scholars from virtually every denomination agree that the early church of the first century practiced vocal music only in its worship services. No one knows exactly when instrumental music was first introduced into the worship, but some scholars feel that it may have been as late as the Seventh or Eighth centuries. Interesting also is the history of the expression "A Capella," which has come to stand today for voeal music only. Originally it meant "as it is done in the churches." What does this say to us about the music of the ancient early church?

The whole question comes down to a question of authority. Does the New Testament authorize any music for worship other than vocal music? I believe the answer to this from the viewpoint of scripture is obviously, no.

Giving To God, Not Robbing Him, Are You?

G.N. Chauhan

In God's reckoning we are all robbers, like God's ancient people robbed Him of what rightfully belonged to God. First, let us see a Scripture to this effect, in Mal. 3:8 it says, "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me: But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings." Human nature has not changed since then. We today are no better in our attitude towards giving. We spend too much on foolish and trifling things than we give to preach the gospel of Christ, the power unto salvation for all and everybody in this world.

There would scarcely be anyone too poor who cannot give something towards the work of God in the church. It takes money to preach the gospel, to take care of the widows and fatherless and orphans. There are many other things in the ministry that requires money. What could be a better gesture, motivated by love for God, His work and His children in the household of God, than to give freely out of a voluntary and cheerful spirit, a mind to give. Notice the words of Paul in (2 Cor. 8:8-15). Words that should make us ashamed, especially if we are Christians "I am not commanding you, but I want to test your sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so...For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according

to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At present your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality as it is written: "He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little." (NIV).

In another scripture reminder for us Christians to feel ashamed if we do not match our doing with what we preach is to be found in (Jas. 2:14-16), It reads, "What does it profit, my brethren if someone says he had faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" Mind you this Scripture is specifically directed to Christians in the Lord's church.

The more we know of God's blessed word the more we want to give towards a good cause. After all, part of godly living includes voluntary giving, because there is more happiness in giving than in receiving. It is a great virtue to be kindly and sincere. The world needs more kindness. Our neighbours need kindness. Many a one has been won to Christ merely by kindness and a friendly smile. There is a fine exhortation in (Eph. 4:32) which reads, "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Another Christian virtue is charity in its fullest essence. See 2 Pet. 1:7. Even v:7 mentions "brotherly kindness", which means love through kindness or kindness through love for one another of the faith.

Another aspect of giving to God which is owing to Him and that we do not rob Him is our devotion and dedication to His service in the Great Commission work. This is working the works of Christ in our day to day lives. In it we should pay God by praying to Him for others and ourselves, to study His word, to grow in the grace and the knowledge of God by searching the Scriptures daily. It is a command from Jesus (Jn. 5:39). To give

ourselves to sincere worship on the first day of the week (Jn. 4:24; Acts 20:7). We must live a godly life right up to the day Christ returns (Tit. 2:11-13). Having done all these things we can look up with real hope and confidence that we will be rewarded in God's due time. And that reward is eternal life.

If Any Man Be In Christ

Garland Elkins

Time is short and the psalmist stated in correctly and concisely for us all when he said, "Remember how short my time is" (Ps. 89:47). Eternity is never ending and there are only two possible destinies, heaven or hell. Jesus said, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Mt. 26:46). There are only two spiritual realms: we are either in Christ or in Satan. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Mt. 12:30) and "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Mt. 6:24). Everything that really matters, the most important things depend upon our being in Christ: happiness and peace of mind in this life (John 10:10; Phil. 4:7); hope in death (I Cor. 15:1-58); and salvation in eternity (Mk. 10:29,30; I Peter 1:9; Rev. 2:10).

All Spiritual Blessings Are In Christ

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Many and great are the spiritual blessings and all are in Christ. To name a few of them, we have forgiveness; redemption (Rom. 3:24); sanctification (I Cor. 1:2); we are a new creature in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). As long as we walk in the light the blood of Christ cleanses us (I John 1:7). In Christ there is Joy (Phil. 4:4); consolation (Phil. 2:1); strength (Phil. 4:13); victory (I Cor. 15:57; II Cor. 2:14); heaven (II Tim. 4:8).

Baptized Into Christ

Baptism is the act of faith that puts one from without Christ to within Christ. "For as many of you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). In Galatians 3:27 and 29 the order is: baptism into Christ, Abraham's seed, heirs. The negative is: no baptism, not in Christ, not Abraham's seed, not heirs. Isn't it incredible, and amazingly amazing that much of the religious world teaches that baptism is non-essential! Truly Satan has many devices and he knows how to blind people to the truth (II Cor. 2:11; 4:3,4). Salvation is in Christ, but salvation follows baptism (Mk. 16:16). Therefore one is not in Christ until he is baptized into Him. Freedom is in Christ, but one is free following obedience to the form of teaching (Rom. 6:17f). Therefore, one is not in Christ until he obeys Christ, Newness of life is in Christ, but newness follows the burial in baptism (Rom. 6:4). Therefore, one is not in Christ until he is baptized into Him.

Faithfulness A Requirement

As Christians we must abide in Christ (John 15:4). The command to abide implies the possibility of not abiding, The reason for abiding is to bear fruit (John 15:4). If one does not abide he will be cut off and burned (John 15:6; Heb 6:4-8). It is possible to: fall from grace (Gal. 5:4); depart from the faith (I Tim. 4:1); deny the faith (I Tim. 5:8); and overthrow the faith of some (II Tim. 2:18).

To abide in Christ means to: abide in the teaching of Christ (II John 9-11); to abide in purity (II Cor. 5:17; James 1:27; I John 2:15-17). The faithful Christian falls asleep in Jesus (I Cor. 15:18). Faithfulness unto death is necessary for the hope of heaven. We must be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). Paul said "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). The reason he could say that was that he had been baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3), and then he had lived the Christian life which was in Christ (II Tim. 4:8). All Christians should add the Christian graces, in fact to go to heaven this is a necessity. Peter wrote, "And beside this giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge tempe-

rance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:5-8). The faithful Christian will at death be blessed forever, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13).

The Incarnation Of Jesus Christ

Steve Williams

One of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It is the affirmation that Christ, although a man in his earthly existence, was more than a man. Christ, although born as a human at Bethlehem, did not begin his existence at that point, or even at the conception in Nazareth. The incarnation is the affirmation that God, in the presence of his Son, has entered humanity. As John put it: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14). Paul explained that "Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men...in human form," (Phil. 2:5-8).

A beautiful poem honouring Christ in his incarnation was written by Gregory of Nazianzus about A.D. 385 (*Sermon* 38. 1-2):

Christ is born, give glory to him;
Christ comes from the heavens, gather to meet him;
Christ comes upon the earth, be filled with rejoicing.
"Sing to the Lord, all the earth"...

Who would not adore him who is from the beginning?
Who would not give praise to him who is the end of all?...
All you nations clap your hands,
because a child is born to us, a Son is given to us.
Sovereignty is upon his shoulder...
and his name is called Mighty Counsellor...
The One without flesh has assumed flesh;
The Word has taken on materiality;
The Invisible had become visible;
The Untouchable is able to be touched;
The Timeless takes on a beginning;
The Son of God becomes Son of Man,
Jesus Christ,
He who is yesterday, today and forever.

The Judgment

Dale Turner

The theme of judgment permeates the pages of God's Word. Every precept and responsibility placed upon man implies a divine judgment. Eternal judgment is one of the foundation principles of the doctrine of Christ. (Hebrews 6:1, 2.). A basic part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. (John 16:8.) "Judgment to come" had a prominent place in the preaching of Paul. (Acts 17:31; 24:25.). Today's faithful messenger of God will likewise thunder the warning, "Prepare to meet thy God."

In today's restrain-free society proclamation of a future judgment meets with hostile reaction. The prevailing philosophy is, "My life is my own, I'll live it as I please." The suggestion of any accountability to any source is insulting to some people. A sincere

belief in divine judgment would be in the least unsettling to a licentious generation, and at most completely terrifying. Thus, it is not surprising to find many people today who are like those of whom Peter wrote, "willingly ignorant" of the judgment of God. (2 Peter 3:5-7.)

Divine revelation teaches that judgment is certain. It is appointed by God and assured to us by the resurrection of Jesus. (Acts 17:31.) It is often called "the day" of judgment because compared to it all other days pale into insignificance. This great event, which will bring history to its culmination, will occur after death (Hebrews 9:27), the second coming of Christ (Matthew 16:27; 25:31, 32) and the resurrection of the dead (Revelation 20:11-13, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). All of us, whether great or small, will be present to give an account of our lives. (Romans 14:12.)

Sitting before this great assembly on the seat of judgment will be Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:10.) The Father has committed the judgment unto the Savior. (John 5:22, 23, 27.) Since he has procured salvation and offered it to all, it is equitable that he judge each person's response to his offer. Since Christ is a righteous judge (2 Timothy 4:8), the exercise of judgment on this day will be in truth and righteousness (Romans 2:2; Acts 17:31). Two important factors substantiate this. First, since Christ will have a perfect and complete knowledge of our hearts (Revelation 2:23) and lives (Hebrews 4:13), all the evidence and testimony necessary to make a fair and impartial judgment will be available. Second, since Christ has lived in the flesh, and known the frailties and trials of humanity, he will be perfectly qualified to judge mankind.

The criterion (or standard) of judgment on that day will be simple—our lives will be measured against the revealed will of God. The "yardstick" will be the word of Christ (John 12:48), the gospel (Romans 2:16). As Christians, we will be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:12.) Christ as the judge, will apply this divine measuring instrument to our lives. In particular, the

Bible teaches that our deeds (2 Corinthians 5:10), thoughts and secrets (Matthew 5:22; Romans 2:16) and even our words (Matthew 12:36, 37) will be inspected. The work that the faithful Christian has done will receive special notice. (1 Corinthians 3:8). At this point, though, we must guard against the impression that the judgment is just a weighing in the balances of the good and bad in our lives. Even the best of men, when they serve God the best that they can, are still unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10), and in need of the soul-cleansing blood of Christ (Revelation 7:14).

Concerning those who died before the Christian age, we note the following; first, the blood of Christ has cleansing power for every man from Adam to Pentecost. (Hebrews 9:15; Romans 3:25, 26.) Second, the Jew will be judged by his faithfulness to God under the law (Romans 2:12), as he lived by faith in the promises of God (Hebrews 2:2; 11:13, 39, 40). Third, the Gentile will be judged according to the light that he had under the patriarchal age (Romans 2:12), as he conformed to God's revealed will (Romans 2:15, 16). God's sending of Jonah to the people of Nineveh indicates the accountability of the Gentiles under this dispensation.

Two unimpeachable verdicts will be pronounced that day. To the righteous, Christ will invite, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34.) To the wicked, Christ will command, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:41). Both verdicts will declare the glory and sovereignty of God. In the destiny of the saints, God's love and grace will be magnified. In the destiny of the sincere, God's holiness and justice will be vindicated.

Yes, there is a great day coming! It will be a bright day for some, a sad day for others. Are you ready for the judgment day?

A Spur To Move You? Or, A Spear To Kill You?

Tim Nichols

When the sun shines upon wet clay, it causes it to harden: When it shines upon wax, it causes it to melt. The action of the sun remains the same; it is the composition of the material acted upon that makes the difference.

Some discourage serious Bible study by claiming that it can never be understood. They tell us that no matter how much we search cannot find truth. What a hopeless feeling this doctrine must cause within its adherents! To be lost, with no hope of learning the way home, would make every action of life meaningless and without purpose. Please do not for a moment accept this false doctrine! It is an incorrect conclusion, drawn too soon by those who have given up. Frustration is something that all men and women must deal with: no one escapes. The *effect* of frustration, however, depends upon the individual. Frustration can spur us on to learn and accomplish more than we otherwise could. Or, it can defeat us where we stand. The choice is ours.

We sometimes have difficulty immediately understanding the meaning of a given passage of scripture. This should surprise no one, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16). It is also the case that within the Bible "are some things hard to be understood" (II Peter 3:16). Even what is difficult to understand *can* be understood. Yet many will give up after a casual reading, and will declare the effort to be futile, What could have an obstacle to overcome becomes an unchallenged enemy who wins without a battle. Although one will not pillow his head at night with every question answered and every difficulty overcome, he can go to sleep with the satisfaction of knowing that he has learned some of the Word of God. He can anticipate discovering more when the battle is resumed and the inspired Book is opened again. Truth is knowable and

worth the search. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Those who love God and would be pleasing to him are those who continue to increase their knowledge of the things of Christ. They study their Bibles. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever" (II Peter 3:18). Timothy was instructed to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (I Timothy 4:13). There are great things awaiting those who will continue the struggle. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

The light of God's word is shining (Psalm 119:130). The purpose of the word is to save "every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). It does not save all who *hear*, because some choose to disbelieve (Mark 16:16). Some begin to believe and obey, but then turn away when difficulty is encountered (Luke 8:6,7). "But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). What effect will the sunlight of God's Word have upon you?

Those who permit the challenge to defeat them, sometimes resent those who continue to wrestle, and who refuse to declare the Bible to be a nebulous mist of meaningless mystery. Many, in frustration, paint everything gray, and grant themselves and all others the freedom to believe, teach, and practice virtually whatever they choose. Others simply leave religious things behind, and refuse to think about them. It is an easy thing to take the path of least resistance for the time being (although it offers no rewards). It requires effort to learn and grow. Which do you admire? Which will you do?

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