

Where Does The church of Christ Get The Authority To Use . . . ?

Some time ago David Martin, minister at the Solid Rock Baptist Church in Bartlett, TN, authored an article entitled "Common Sense Questions A 'Church Of Christ' Preacher Cannot Clearly Answer." This article contains 13 questions that address subjects such as the necessity of baptism and instrumental music. Through much study and reading on these subjects I have formulated answers that cite "book, chapter, and verse" references showing what the Bible teaches regarding these questions. This article addresses Mr. Martin's tenth question.

It is my prayer that anyone who reads this article will study the verses cited with an open mind to truly learn what God's Word teaches. Obedience to God's Word, nothing more and nothing less, is what will get us to Heaven. We all want to go, but we have to remember that those who reach Heaven will do so on God's terms, not man's.

QUESTION

If the "Church of Christ" claims to worship God only as "authorized" by scripture because they sing only (and do not use instrumental music), then where do they get the "authority" to use hymnals, pitch pipes, pews, and indoor baptisteries in their worship services? If the answer is that they are "aids to worship," where does the Bible allow for that? Where is your required authorization? If a pitch pipe can be an "aid to worship" for the song service in the "Church of Christ," then why can't a piano be an "aid to worship" for Baptists who may need more help in singing?

BOOK CHAPTER AND VERSE ANSWER

This question is an attempt to justify instrumental music. We will look at that in detail a little later. First of all we need to look at two scriptures.

Joh 4:24

(24) God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

Act 17:24-25

(24) God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

(25) Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

John 4:24 tells us that we must worship in spirit and in truth. That implies that there is a right way to worship and wrong ways worship. We must know how to worship correctly in order to be pleasing to God. Acts 17:24-25 tells us one of the wrong ways to worship.

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We then must search the Scriptures to learn what God has commanded us to do and how he said for us to do it. In the Scriptures you will find two types of commands, general and specific. Let's begin by looking at the following passage:

Mar 16:15

- (15) And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.**

This verse contains both specific and general commands. Go is a general command. God says go but he doesn't say how. We can go by foot, car, plane, train, horse, or even by the Internet. These things allow us to go to more places and reach more people. They do not change the fact that we are going. As long as we go, we are obeying the command. Preach is a general command. God says to preach, but he doesn't say how to do it. We are free to choose whatever method will be the most effective as long as it doesn't change the fact that we are preaching.

God then follows the general command to preach with a specific command. He specifies what it is we are to preach. He says to preach the Gospel. Preaching anything other than the Gospel would be disobeying God even though he didn't tell us what not to preach. From this example it is easy to see that there are two types of commands. Let's then apply this to the question. We'll begin by looking at Eph 5:19.

Eph 5:19

- (19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;**

This verse contains both specific and general commands. The first phrase, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," contains the specific command for the individuals who are assembled to speak to each other. What are they to speak to each other? They are to speak in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. This command has both a specific and a general element. We are told specifically to speak in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but we are not told whether they are to be fast or slow, high pitched or low, four-part harmony or not. As long as we are speaking to ourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs we are fulfilling what this phrase is commanding. If we use some other type of song, we are disobeying this command.

The second phrase of this verse is very specific. It tells us exactly how we are to speak to ourselves. That is by "singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord;" Singing and making melody in our hearts eliminates all other forms of music. If someone is playing an instrument, they are making melody on that instrument. God told us to make melody, just as he said to preach. He told us

what to preach (the Gospel) and he told us what instrument to use to make melody (the heart). Doing anything other than this is disobeying God.

What about hymnals, pitch pipes, and pews? Do these things change the form of worship? No, they do not. We use a hymnal in order for all to sing the same words and to show us the melody and tempo of the song. The song-leader sometimes uses a pitch pipe to sound one note in order to get the song pitched correctly so everyone can sing. He then puts it away and the congregation sings the song. No melody is made on the pitch pipe. Pews are available for us to sit on while we sing. Again, this doesn't change the fact that we are singing.

The same is true for baptisteries. The Bible only specifies that there be enough water to completely immerse someone. We are free to choose where this takes place as long as we don't change what God commanded.

There is a difference between an aid to worship and an addition to worship. An aid helps us worship but neither participates in the worship nor changes the form of worship. Songbooks, pews, and pitch pipes clearly do not participate in or change the form of worship. The same can't be said for playing an instrument. Playing an instrument is making melody in a place where God did not tell us to make melody.

Donnie Autry