

WHY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST CANNOT PLAY INSTRUMENTS AND DANCE IN WORSHIP

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Introduction: worship is rendering or giving deep respect, honour and glory to God the only object of worship – **Matthew 4:10** – ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, ^[a] Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.

In worship the worshippers should seek to please God and not self. This must be done in spirit and truth alongside our faith in Him – **John 4:24** - ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”, **Hebrews 11:6** - ⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. The demonstration of faith is shown in worship as heard from **Romans 10:17** – ¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Music and dance has its place and purpose in worship of the church. This place and purpose has been created by Divine authority and must be respected, honoured to the glory of God. Therefore, Christians should recognise the importance of the kind of music God authorises and abide by it. Secondly, the purpose the music should serve and thirdly the manner in which the music should be rendered.

A. BASIC DEFINITIONS ALL CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW IN THE WORSHIP:

- i. **The Church:** A spiritual house of God in which to offer up spiritual sacrifices – **1 Peter 2:5** - ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. This excludes instrumental music, dancing and clapping in the worship.
- ii. **Instrumental Music:** This is the rhythmical combination of playing different musical instruments with vocal music tones. Music is made up of two types: (a) vocal music and (b) instrumental music. The New Testament specifies vocal music in worship.
- iii. **Dancing:** (a) To move the body and feet rhythmically especially to music. (b) To move or skip excitedly, quiver as from excitement or emotion. (c) To bob up and down, move about lightly and quickly etc. (*The New Int'l Webster's comprehensive dictionary of the English language: Encyclopaedic edition*).

Wikipedia defines dancing as a performing art form consisting of purposefully selected sequence of human movement. This movement has aesthetic and symbolic

value and is acknowledged as dance by performers and observers within a particular culture.

It is not the culture of the New Testament Christian worship to be playing instrumental music, dancing to music whether vocal or not and clapping, raising hands to heaven. Therefore, it would be wrong and disobedience for any Christian and the church as a whole to be involved in dancing whether brisk or mild one.

B. THE PLACE OF CHRISTIANS IN THE TESTAMENT:

There are two covenants or testaments in which God deals with man.

- i. The Old Testament shows how God guided and led His chosen people (Israel) preparatory to the coming of the Saviour – **Galatians 3:19-24** – ¹⁹ *What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.* ²⁰ *Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.* ²¹ *Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.* ²² *But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.* ²³ *But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.* ²⁴ *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.,* **Romans 15:4** – ⁴ *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*
- ii. The New Testament in which the promised Saviour arrived, the truth given, by which Christians are led and guided – **John 1:17** – ¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,* **Hebrews 1:1-2** – *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds,* **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – ¹⁶ *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work..*

- C. **THE CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIAN WORSHIP BELONGS TO THE NEW TESTAMENT** – **Matthew 16:18** – ¹⁸ *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it,* **Acts 11:26** – ²⁶ *And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch,* **Acts 20:28** – ²⁸ *Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God^[a] which He purchased with His own blood,* **2 Corinthians 3:8** – ⁸ *how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?*

D. THE MUSIC OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS KIND

- i. The New Testament scriptures authorises singing (vocal music) only. **(a) Matthew 26:30** – ³⁰ *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives,* **(b) Acts 16:25** – ²⁵ *But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God,*

and the prisoners were listening to them, **(c) Romans 15:9** – ⁹ and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.”, **(d) 1 Corinthians 14:15** – ¹⁵ What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding, **(e) Ephesians 5:19** – ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, **(f) Colossians 3:16** – ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord, **(g) Hebrews 2:12** – ¹² saying: “I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You, **Hebrews 13:15** – ¹⁵ Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name **(h) James 5:13** – ¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

- ii. The command to sing is specific and excludes all other kinds of music in the worship renders by Christians.
- iii. Dancing is never found in the New Testament. Its place in worship might be additions. Singing excludes clapping, dancing and instrumental music. Compare the following instructions of God. (a) **Genesis 6:14** – ¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch–Gopher wood excludes other wood. (b) Leviticus 16 – the commands there excludes other items. (c) God commands vocal music which excludes instrumental music.
- iv. When something more than singing is done by the individual and the church, God has been disobeyed – **2 John 9-11** – ⁹ Whoever transgresses^[a] and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; ¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds., **1 Corinthians 4:6** – ⁶ Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.
- v. The New Testament scriptures are sufficient on worship music for the Christian – **2 Peter 1:2-3** – ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue., **Romans 1:17** – ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith, **1 Corinthians 9:21** – ²¹ to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God,^[a] but under law toward Christ^[b]), that I might win those who are without law, **2 Corinthians 5:7** – ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight.

E. THE PURPOSE OF SINGING IN WORSHIP

- i. To praise and thanksgiving unto God – **Hebrews 13:15, Acts 16:25.**
- ii. Teaching and admonishing one another – **Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16.**
Music in worship is to instruct, communicate ideas to one another, advice persons to right living as we praise with thanksgiving and supplication to God.

F. NEW TESTAMENT MANNER OF PRAISE RENDITION – Acts 16:25, Romans 15:9, 1 Corinthians 14:15, 1 Corinthians 3:16, James 5:13:

- (a) Unto God – being directed as praise to Him not simply entertainment. Anytime music in Christian worship degenerates into efforts to entertain, it becomes a stench in the nostrils of God (imagine the case of Cain). Whenever any act of worship is not directed to God, it misses the mark and is therefore in vain – **Matthew 15:8-9** – ⁸ *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And^[a] honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men, 2 John 9.*
- (b) In Spirit – the worshipper should sing with all sincerity of heart.
- (c) With understanding – knowing the meaning of the wordings
- (d) To be understood – pronounce plainly enough to be heard and understood by the audience.
- (e) The kind of music to be used – these are Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs

G. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC AND DANCING IN WORSHIP WAS PRACTICE UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:

- a. Christ has stopped, annul, abrogate, and removed the practices of the Old Testament at the cross – **Colossians 2:14** – ¹⁴ *having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*
- b. Christians worship God through Christ without instruments of music, dancing, clapping etc. – **Matthew 17:4-5** – ⁴ *Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us^[a] make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”, 1 Timothy 2:5* – ⁵ *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, Hebrews 1:1-2* – *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.*

- H. **PLEA:** Those who are dancing in the worship should note the danger. Those who are imitating should equally fear hell. The elders have the task to call on those dancing to counselling and order please.

Conclusion

Worship is to please God and the worshipper rewarded for obedience. Music in Christian worship is vocal. Dancing and clapping is an act of disobedience to God by any church of Christ. Individuals should see the vain glory in it. As seen in the seven churches recorded in **Revelation 2-3**, all Christians must be careful of his or her worship pattern.