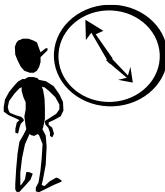


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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Slinging Mud on the Bride of Christ

By Mike Richardson

An Unthinkable Image

Imagine attending a wedding. The bride is arrayed in a beautiful white wedding gown, ready to go down the aisle to be presented to the groom. As she walks down the aisle, people on both sides of her begin to throw mud at her. She ducks down, but the people's aim is good, and they continue to sling mud at her. The white dress that symbolizes purity is now stained with common dirt and mud. The damage is done, and that which is to be white and glorious is now darkened with mud stains.

The Church Is the Bride of Christ

In John 3:29, John the Baptist declared that he was not the Christ, but Jesus is. John called Jesus the Bridegroom. *"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled."* Jesus is the Bridegroom. John was the best man. The church is His bride. What is the church? It is the collective group of redeemed people. Our conduct and communication will either honor our Lord or bring reproach upon His name.

In Ephesians 5:25-27, Paul writes, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."* The church is to be pure for the bridegroom.

In Revelation 19:7-8 the church has made herself ready for the day the Groom will come for the marriage feast. Her attire is clean and bright, this being the righteous acts of

the saints. In Revelation 21:2, we again see a picture of the bride adorned for her groom. John 14:1-5 is written in a similar language. In biblical times, a groom, after the engagement “contract,” would prepare a place (house), come back for her after it was completed, and then the wedded pair would begin their lives together.

Mudslingers in the Church

We can expect the world to sling mud at the church, but what is hurtful is seeing so many saints in the household of God throw mud. I understand the difference between the universal and local church. I know the universal church is perfect in every way, while local churches may have issues and are not perfect. A pervasive problem today is that issues are being handled, but often inappropriately. Some issues arise and must be dealt with, but how we deal with them is of the utmost importance. When we paint with broad brush accusations against the church or when we take to social media to air grievances without going to individuals, we need to be careful lest we be guilty of slinging mud on the bride of Christ. Consider some instances where mud is slung on the church, the Bride of Christ.

Continuing in Sin

When a child of God continues in sin, it undoubtedly stains the church. In Revelation 3, most of the saints in Sardis were living in sin and were told to repent. However, Revelation 3:4 tells us a few had not defiled their garments. Then the Divine Record states that he who overcomes will be clothed in white garments, and the Lord said He would not blot their names out of the Book of Life. It’s one thing to fall short and get back up, repent, and seek to live for the glory of God; it’s another to stay in the wallow of sin. Peter stated, *“It has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire’”* (II Peter 2:22). You cannot live in the filth of sin and glorify God. Our sins are washed away in baptism. We are now to walk in the newness of life, not returning to a life of sin and continuing therein (Romans 6:1-9).

Missing from the Assembly

My heart is made to sorrow over so many who no longer come together with the saints to worship God. I understand many cannot attend due to illness, etc., but there is a difference between cannot and won’t! With social media and other outlets, staying home and watching services from the couch can be tempting. I hear the argument being made, “I can worship there just as well.” As one brother said, “You can see the fire, but you cannot feel its warmth.” We are commanded to come together, and there is wisdom in that. What an insult to the rest of the brethren to say (in essence), “I don’t want to be with you, and I don’t need your fellowship.” Forsaking the assembly is throwing mud at the Bride.

The Complainers

There have always been and always will be complainers, those who are unsatisfied unless things are done their way. This is often a general dissatisfaction rather than issues of Bible doctrine. If we complain to the world about the church (or post on social media our dissatisfaction with the church), what do we think the lost will think of the body of Christ? Have we come to believe that the church only exists for our needs and not for the glory of God (Ephesians 3:21)? People complain, "I didn't get anything out of the service" or "I wasn't edified." The question is: did you put anything into the worship, and who did you edify? If in your marriage you are only concerned about self and never show love to your spouse, you have acted against the will of God and the purpose of marriage. In religion, if we do not put Christ first but are more concerned about self, that too is against the will of God and the ultimate purpose of the church. Yes, we must be honest that local churches have problems, but the church is precious. Jesus loves and cherishes the church (Ephesians 5:29). When we complain about the church, we complain about what Jesus died to purchase (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28). As a member of the body of Christ, do we deliberately throw mud at our brethren and ourselves? Are we making filthy that which Christ came to redeem and cleanse from sin (Revelation 1:5)? With our words, conduct and communication (i.e. social media) are we throwing mud at the bride of Christ?

The Results of Mud-Slinging

When we stop and observe what mud-slinging does, it is a heartbreaking picture.

It Hands the Devil an Opportunity

In Ephesians 6:10-18 we are instructed to put on the whole armor of God and stand against the enemy. One cannot prepare to face the enemy if they are too busy throwing mud at the Bride. The devil loves it when we do his work for him. Let us be careful lest we make a mess of what Christ died to purify and sanctify. We must stand for truth and defend truth, but in doing so, let us not stain the church. In our defense of the gospel, let us be bold but loving. Speak with candor but also kindness.

It Hands the Lost an Excuse

Many use the complaints and accusations against the church as an excuse to avoid religion. This is only an excuse and not a reason, but is it not tear-jerking that many see the mud on the garment instead of the beauty of the family of God?

It Hands Christ a Heartache

Imagine if someone was throwing mud at your spouse or a loved one. Would it not hurt you to see your loved one mistreated? How would you feel if I were to speak wickedly about your spouse? Think about how the Lord must feel when mud is thrown on His Bride. We must be careful how we speak about the church of our Lord. The Groom will come one day to take His bride home. Are we ready for the Wedding Feast?

Musical Instruments in Worship

Colossians 3:16-17

Introduction: For thousands of years, God has authorized man to use music in worship to Him. As we study the New Testament, we find that music was an important part in the early church. Music in the first century worship was entirely and exclusively vocal. However, as time passed, man wanted to “improve” the music used in worship so he introduced mechanical instruments in the worship service.

The issue before us is not music in worship but the kind of music in worship. Does God approve of us using vocal or instrumental music in our worship to Him? Does the type of music used in worship to God make any difference to Him?

I. The history of instrumental music in worship.

A. Instruments of music were introduced into worship nearly 700 years after the church was established. It was first encouraged by Pope Vitalian in 666 A.D. of the apostate Roman Catholic church. However, it was not generally practiced until the ninth century. The practice of using instruments in worship was long resisted through the 12th century even in the apostate church. Even the Greek Orthodox Catholic church still refuses to use instrumental music.

B. By the time of the Restoration Movement in the 15th century, instrumental music in worship was so common place that all denominations that split away from the Catholic church carried mechanical instruments into their worship. Ironically, many of the denominational founders were opposed to the use of instrumental music in worship.

1. John Calvin (Presbyterian) - “no more suitable than burning incense.”

2. Martin Luther (Lutheran) - “a work of Baal.”

3. John Wesley (Methodist) - “no objection to instruments of music, so long as they are neither seen or heard.”

C. In time, even the Lord’s church, was influenced to accept this practice. The first church of Christ on record to use mechanical instruments in worship was a church in Midway, Kentucky, in 1859. The church of Christ was torn asunder. What resulted were more apostate churches known today as the Christian church and the more liberal Disciples of Christ.

II. Why we must sing.

A. Singing is commanded ([Col 3:16](#); [Eph. 5:19](#)).

B. By singing we speak to one another, we teach one another, and we admonish one another. Instruments are not capable of speaking, teaching nor admonishing. Actually, instruments are a distraction when trying to speak, teach and admonish in song.

C. We are to sing with the spirit and understanding ([1 Cor. 14:15](#)). Can I honestly do either of these while I’m playing an instrument?

III. Why we can't use instrumental music in worship.

A. Instrumental music transgresses the authority of Christ by injecting something into worship which the Lord and His Apostles have not taught (2 Jn. 9; Col. 3:17).

B. Instrumental music makes worship vain by a practice of men (Matt. 15:8-9).

C. Instrumental music causes and has caused division (1 Cor. 1:10).

D. Instrumental music cannot be used in worship because it has no part in the truth revealed to us through Christ or the Holy Spirit (John 4:24; 16:13).

E. Instrumental music cannot be used in faith because its use is not taught in God's word (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17; 14:23).

F. Instrumental music has no part in the divine pattern (John 12:48).

Interlude: I had the opportunity to talk to a manager of one of our local "Christian" radio stations. He actually believes that the rock music they play on their radio station when sung along by their listeners constitutes an act of worship to God. When I explained that instrumental music is not pleasing to the Lord in worship he was flabbergasted. After all, he thought he was providing worship services 24/7 to his listening audience. He departed with tears in his eyes not being able to justify this sinful practice.

For the remaining portion of our lesson, let's review a few of the most common objections used to justify the use of instrumental music in worship.

IV. "Instruments were used under the Law of Moses."

A. Agreed, but so were animal sacrifices, burning of incense, observing certain feasts, and polygamy. To keep one part of the Old Law requires you to keep it all (James 2:10).

B. To justify what we do by the Law of Moses is to commit spiritual adultery and to fall from grace (Gal. 5:4).

C. We are no longer under the Old Law. Christ died so we would no longer be subject to it (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:14-16; Heb. 10:9-10).

V. "David used instruments of music in worship" (2 Chron. 29:25).

A. Under Moses, instruments were never authorized nor used in worship.

1. In the Syriac and Arabic manuscripts, the above passage is translated thus: "*Hezekiah appointed the Levites in the house of the Lord, with instruments of music, and the sound of harps, and with the HYMNS of DAVID, and the HYMNS of GAD, the king's prophet, and of NATHAN, the king's prophet: for David sang the praises of the Lord his God, as from the mouth of the prophets.*" [Adam Clark's Commentary on the Old Testament]