

God's Word and Music

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What Does God's Word Say about Music? Below is a brief overview of some of the Scriptures in the Bible that cover the topic of music. I pray it will be a blessing.

Music that has Scripture as its theme

Scripture as the theme of the song – *“Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.”* (Psalm 119:54)

The children of Israel also sang a song after the LORD delivered them at the Red Sea. This song is known as the song of Moses and can be found in Exodus 15:1-21. This song became a part of Scripture. This song remained with the children of Israel throughout the ages, and it will be sung again at the end of the tribulation by all those who got victory over the beast and over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name. They will stand on the sea of glass and accompany this song with the harps of God. *“¹And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. ²And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. ³And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying....”* (Revelation 15:1-3)

Music that ascribes power and victory to the Lord

The song of Moses ascribed power and victory to the Lord, *“¹¹Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? ¹²Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. ¹³Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.”* (Exodus 15:11-13)

The people of Israel, including the women, played music and sang in honor of God in His defeat over His enemies. *“²²The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea: ²³That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. ²⁴They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. ²⁵The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. ²⁶Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.”* (Psalm 68:22-26)

Music to accompany sacrifice with gladness

Do you know why we have music during the time that the offering is taken up? Well, I do not know the real reason we have it today, but the practice is nothing new. In Bible days, music was used to show gladness while the offering was taking place or to accompany the offering as a memorial to God. The following verses are very interesting.

“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.” (Numbers 10:10)

“²⁶And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. ²⁷And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. ²⁸And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped.” (II Chronicles 29:26-29)

Now when we hear the offertory, we can remember that it is a memorial to God and it is a sign that we have gladness in our hearts. We can give with gladness. God loves a cheerful giver. *“⁷Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” (II Corinthians 9:7)*

Music to prepare the heart to worship

“²⁶And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. ²⁷And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. ²⁸And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped.” (II Chronicles 29:26-29)

Music was offered with the sacrifices, after which the king and the people bowed themselves and worshipped.

Music to Precede Prophecy

“¹⁴And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee. ¹⁵But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. ¹⁶And he said, Thus saith the LORD... “ (II Kings 3:15,16a)

“⁵After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy: ⁶And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. ⁷And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee.” (I Samuel 10:5-7)

“¹Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was: ²Of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king. ³Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD.” (I Chronicles 25:1-3)

There is some wonder as to the purpose of the music that precedes or accompanies prophecy. In I Samuel 10:5-7, it appears that the music is to prepare the prophets' heart to prophesy. The Spirit of the Lord is pleased with the right kind of music and He reveals to the prophets what they are to prophesy. In I Chronicles, the sons of Asaph, who were singers and musicians, prophesied. One of them prophesied with the harp.

Today, before the preaching begins in a church service, there is usually a special song. They used to say that “so and so is going to come sing and prepare our hearts for the message.” Singing is very important and a solemn task and privilege in the work of God. Some of the prophets not only had music before the prophesy, but some also, like Jeduthun, prophesied with their music or while playing their musical instruments. What place might music have with preaching? And how should it be incorporated? I have heard some preaching with music played in the background, but the music was usually distracting. What did it mean to prophesy with the music? How could it accompany the prophecy?

Music to Soothe the Oppression of Evil Spirits

Good godly music can soothe from the oppression of evil spirits. In king Saul's case, he only experienced a temporary reprieve because he never repented of his sins. (See I Samuel 18:10,11 and I Samuel 19:9)

"¹⁴But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. ¹⁵And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. ¹⁶Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. ¹⁷And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. ¹⁸Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him. ¹⁹Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. ²⁰And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. ²¹And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer. ²²And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. ²³And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." (I Samuel 16:14-23)

Music Ministry

Today we often think of "music ministry" as volunteering in the choir or singing a special song during the service. This is part of music ministry, but do we realize how important these things are to God?

King David set some people over the music ministry after the ark of the covenant was brought back to Jerusalem. *"³¹And these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest. ³²And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and then they waited on their office according to their order..." (I Chronicles 6:31,32)*

People were chosen to have the service of song and to minister in the tabernacle of the congregation with singing. They were appointed to that office and kept that office in their proper order.

Nehemiah also describes the importance of the ministry of music. ²²*The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers were over the business of the house of God.* ²³*For it was the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day.*" (Nehemiah 11:22,23) The singers not only had the ministry of music, but they also took part, along with the Levites, in overseeing the business of the house of God. There were both men and women singers, *"...they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women."* (Nehemiah 7:67b)

Not only were the singers given a place of prominence and place, in part, over the business of the house of God, they were to be paid. In Nehemiah 11:23, it was seen that they were to receive a portion every day. When the singers were not given their daily portions, Nehemiah took this very seriously. ¹⁰*And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites **and the singers, that did the work,** were fled every one to his field.* ¹¹*Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place.*" (Nehemiah 13:10,11) Nehemiah found out that neither the Levites nor the singers had been paid. He immediately took steps to remedy that and brought the Levites and singers back and set them in their places.

Singing was accompanied by thanksgiving and praise, ⁴⁵*And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son.* ⁴⁶*For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.*" (verses 45,46)

Music ministry was very important to God. It was so important to God that He listed the musicians along with the Levites and the porters. The musicians were to be paid for their work, and they were to help oversee the business of the house of God. They were to be pure and to give praise and thanksgiving unto God.

When we have the opportunity to minister in music, we must remember that this is a holy, pure work. It is a work for God, a work worthy of honor and therefore a work that must praise and give thanks to God. It is not just a passing service, something to do before the preaching starts. It is a time of purity and praise and service to God.

Music for Rejoicing

“And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.” (I Chronicles 13:8) The ark of the covenant was finally being brought back to Jerusalem. King David and the people of Israel rejoiced greatly. They took their instruments and played before God with all their might. They sang songs and played their instruments, including cymbals and trumpets. What a triumphant, glorious, and joyful celebration this must have been!

In this case, the celebration was short lived because the people did not obey God and the ark was not brought back in the proper manner. The rejoicing was turned to mourning because someone lost his life. The ark was brought back on a cart. When they came to the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to steady the ark because the oxen stumbled. No one was supposed to touch the ark. The Levites were supposed to carry it on poles that had been slipped through the carrying rings. When Uzza put forth his hand and touched the ark, this displeased God very much and God smote him and he died. David and the Israelites would try again after a while.

The second attempt to bring back the ark was much more successful. *“²⁵So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obededom **with joy.** ²⁶And it came to pass, when **God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD,** that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. ²⁷And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. ²⁸Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.”* (I Chronicles 15:25-28)

The second celebration was much like the first. The ark was brought back with shouting, the sound of cornets, the blowing of trumpets, the sounding of cymbals, and the making of noise upon psalteries and harps. The ark symbolized the presence of God and the mercy seat of the ark was the place where God dwelt. When God dwells among a people, there is cause for great rejoicing. Singing and playing of instruments are a part of great rejoicing.

Music and Mourning

Interestingly, I could find only three times in the Bible where music is mentioned with mourning. One of those is Job 30:31. Job was suffering greatly from the boils that afflicted him from head to foot. He suffered also as his friends, and even his wife, did not stand with him. He said, *“²⁸I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation. ²⁹I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls. ³⁰My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. ³¹My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.”* (Job 30:28-31) Besides having boils everywhere, Job suffered from bone pain and burning sensations, maybe fever. His earthly companions were gone. His heart was sorrowful, and the music he played was only mournful.

The second time music and mourning are mentioned is at the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead. Jesus went to the house and all the mourners were there. *“And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise.”* (Matthew 9:23) Minstrels were hired, and people mourned and made a noise. But Jesus said, *“Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. ²⁵But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.”*

The third mention is found in Matthew 11 and Luke 7, which both give an account of the same story. Luke 7:32 says, *“They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.”* Like children today, the children of the Bible times enjoyed playing and acting things out. They would act out weddings and funerals. There was the pipe to be played at weddings, and there was mourning to do at the funeral. These verses do not directly say there was music with mourning, but they do show the contrast between the joyful music of wedding and the mournful sadness of a funeral.

In other instances in Scripture where mourning was mentioned, music was set aside for the time of mourning. In Psalm 137, the children of Israel hung up their harps and did not want to sing because they were in captivity.

One day God will judge the earth because of the iniquity found in it. At that time, there will be mourning and sighing. Music will cease. *“¹Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. ²And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so*

*with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. ³The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. ⁴The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. ⁵The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. ⁶Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. ⁷The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh. ⁸**The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.**" (Isaiah 24:1-8)*

There are other times that music should cease as well. One of these is a time of national mourning or the mourning of God's people because of sin. *"And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth."* (Isaiah 22:12) When a land and a people are full of sin, God calls to mourning and weeping and humbling of people before Him. He called for this in Israel's day, but Israel did not hear. Instead they partied and reveled, and made themselves glad. Verse thirteen says, *"And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die."* But they did not have to die. *"If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? ¹¹Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* (Ezekiel 33:10b,11)

Maybe our music has been getting more "exciting" and more pleasing to the flesh, and we have turn to more pleasure seeking activities, even in our churches, because we do not want to recognize our sin. Maybe there is sin in our lives that we need to face and confess. Maybe we need to humble ourselves before a holy God. Maybe weeping and mourning and humility is needed among God's people today. Maybe we are pining away in our sin and need to turn from our wicked way so we can live and not die. Maybe it is time to put aside our singing and mirth for a while so that we can examine ourselves and repent and confess our sins.

Music in the Night

Christians have what no other person has, a song in the night. It is not their own song; it is the song that God has given them. In Job 35:10 we read, *"Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?"* Psalm 42:8 comforts us with these words, *"Yet the*

LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

When the Psalmist was going through trouble, he said, *"I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search."* (Psalm 77:6) In Psalm 119:62, the Psalmist said, *"At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments."* When all else is going wrong and we are going through the darkest night, we can still have a song and give thanks because God remembers us, God is our maker and our life, and God's judgments (His acts toward men and His divine law) are righteous. Man is changeable, and his heart is evil. God never changes, and He is always righteous.

When Paul and Silas were in prison for their work for the Lord, they also had a song in the night. *"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."* (Acts 16:25) The songs of Paul and Silas were a testimony to the prisoners that God is always with them. Even in prison they were not forsaken or alone, and they did not have to be afraid. Psalm 40:3 says, *"He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD."* Paul and Silas sang this new song that God had put in their mouths, and all the prisoners heard it and learned that their God was great and worthy of praise.

For Israel there is coming a wonderful day when they will weep no more, *"For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee."* (Isaiah 30:19) At this time there will be singing and music and great rejoicing. God says, *"Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel."* (verse 29)

The music of God is for happy times and times of trouble, it is for the day and for the night. The music of God is for now, and for the future, and for eternity. The music of God brings comfort, thankfulness, and gladness of heart – in the day, and in the night season as well.

Music in the Morning

God gives music in the night, and He gives music in the morning as well. In Psalm 57:7-10, the Psalmist David said, *"⁷My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. ⁸Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. ⁹I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. ¹⁰For*

thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. ¹Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth."

The words of David and the reason for his morning song are repeated in Psalm 108:1-5, *"O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. ²Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. ³I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. ⁴For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. ⁵Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth."*

Music must have been part of David's morning worship of the Lord. In Psalm 5:2,3, David assured the LORD, *"Unto thee will I pray. ³My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."*

Our Maker, who gives us songs in the night, looks forward to hearing our songs in the morning.

Musical Instruments for Worship

Music in Bible times was not dull and monotonous. It was often joyful, full of praise, and the singing was accompanied by various musical instruments.

Organ

The first musical instrument mentioned in the Bible was an organ. The descendants of Cain were the ones who invented the organ (see Genesis 4:21). However, the organ was one of the instruments used by the Israelites to praise God. Psalm 150:4 says, *"Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs."* It is not really clear what an organ was like in Bible days, but it seemed to be some kind of wind instrument, especially as more than one were used together in a time of praise song. Some believe that it is a general term referring to all wind instruments, but a pipe is mentioned separately from the organ.

Here is a look at some verses about the organ and the pipe. Already mentioned above is Genesis 4:21, the invention of the organ. It was invented by Jubal, who was about a fifth or sixth generation from Cain, the brother of Abel. Jubal also invented the harp. Job was able to play the organ. He had played it for songs of joy. When he became very ill and was rejected by friends and family, he played the organ for songs of sorrow. *"My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep."* (Job 30:31)

Pipes

Now a look at pipes. Pipes were used for various purposes and at various times.

Prophecy

They were used to accompany prophecy. I Samuel 10:5 says, *“After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy.”*

Anointing of Kings

Pipes were used at the anointing of kings. I Kings 1:40 is in reference to the anointing of king Solomon, *“And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them.”*

Celebration

One day when Israel comes back to God and God restores everything to them, there will be gladness of heart and a time of rejoicing. Isaiah 30:29 says, *“Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel.”*

Mourning

Pipes were sometimes used for mourning, *“Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kirheres: because the riches that he hath gotten are perished.”* (Jeremiah 48:36)

Angels

Pipes were used in the creation of Lucifer, the most beautiful angel while he was perfect in beauty in the day he was created. God made him this way, and he was so beautiful before he chose to rebel against God. *“Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.”* (Ezekiel 28:13) God liked music very much and made His most beautiful angel to have pipes and tabrets, instruments for making music. Sadly, Lucifer was very proud of his beautiful appearance. He did not use those instruments to bring glory to God but chose to rebel against God. Now he uses these instruments for himself and to draw many after him. He has instruments that could have been used to worship God. Now they are used to make wrong music, music that will draw people after the devil and down the devil's path and to the devil's destination – the fires of hell. It is very

important that we remember why God gave us the gifts of music and the ability to play musical instruments. They are to bring glory to His name, not for any glory or name for ourselves. All glory belongs to God.

Tabrets

Another instrument often mentioned along with pipes is the tabret and timbrel. The tabret was like a tambourine without the jingles. If the plural “tabrets” is used, this refers to a tambourine with jingles attached. Tabrets were used by the prophets when prophesying (See I Samuel 10:5), but they were also often played by women. Miriam played the timbrel (tambourine) when she and the women sang and danced before the Lord after the crossing of the Red Sea. She was honored by the Lord for this in Micah 6:4, where God reminded Israel, *“I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.”* Nothing specific is mentioned that Miriam did to aid Moses and the children of Israel on the Exodus journey, except for the time that she got the women together to sing and play their tabrets and timbrels after the people had crossed the Red Sea and God had destroyed their enemies. This praise to God in music must have pleased God much, and no doubt it blessed the people also.

According to worshipexpressions.net, “The ancient original form of the tabret was a small, one-sided drum with a leather strap attached; beaten by stick or hand. Modern-day tabrets are a stylized version of the ancient tabret.” The ancient tabrets were also often ornamented and decorated and were beautiful instruments. They were as much for looks as they were for sound.

While tabrets were used in prophesying, they were also commonly used in celebration. They were used during the singing of psalms of victory. Women, or the “daughters of Israel,” often applauded great victories by singing and playing timbrels and tabrets. Here is one example, *“⁶And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.”* (I Samuel 18:6,7) Not only did the women play tabrets, but they knew how to play other instruments as well. These instruments were used to celebrate in a time of joy.

The other day, I was listening to some Psalms on youtube. They were being sung by a choir in one of those old, liturgical styles that are very monotonous and have little change to music. When I read the Bible and the introductory titles to the various Psalms, it does not seem that the singing of many of these Psalms would be done in such a manner. It seems like many were accompanied with musical instruments, joy, and

excitement. Take Psalm 150 for example. Look at all the instruments mentioned there that were used for times of praise:

*“¹Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. ²Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. ³Praise him with the sound of the **trumpet**: praise him with the **psaltery and harp**. ⁴Praise him with the **timbrel** and dance: praise him with **stringed instruments and organs**. ⁵Praise him upon the **loud cymbals**: praise him upon the **high sounding cymbals**. ⁶Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”* (Psalm 150) In this psalm, at least eight different instruments were mentioned that could be used to praise the Lord. Consider what some of them are – trumpet, timbrel, cymbals. These do not sound like droning, monotonous instruments but instruments of joy, excitement, and enthusiasm.

The music of the Bible was not some primitive, disjointed, out of harmony attempt to do what they could with the little they knew. God gave people of the past intelligence and wisdom and amazing abilities and talents just like He gives people today. At the great thanksgiving celebration during the time of the rebuilding of the wall under governor Nehemiah, there was a choir of 245 singing men and women and some that God had put over them to be their organizers and leaders. When they sang, they sang loudly and were heard afar off. (Read chapters seven and twelve of Nehemiah (starting with verse 31 of chapter twelve), to learn some of the wonderful and exciting things God did during that time.)

I do not have time in this particular study to go through all the instruments in the Bible and the times and purposes for which each one was used, but that would be a fascinating study. For now, I will go on to consider music in a more general manner.

Music and a Right Heart

This subject could also go under the category of Ministry in Music. Right music comes from a right heart. Effective ministry in music or in any other area comes from a heart that is pure and holy. In a study I did previously, *How to Rebuild a Nation*, based on the book of Nehemiah, I was amazed at the emphasis God put on purity in the work of the ministry. Everyone and everything was to be pure and clean if ministry for God was to be done correctly and effectively.

First, the people who ministered gave attention to the word of God. As they began to minister with a right heart, they noticed that *“therein was found written...”* (See Nehemiah 13:1). Following those words were the names of the groups of people that

were not supposed to be part of the congregation of God's people. The people of God must be separate from the people of the world in ministry.

Secondly, verses four and five showed that even the chambers or rooms that were to house things for the ministry were to be kept pure and set apart for the ministry. They were not to be used for other people or things.

In chapter twelve of Nehemiah, a great thanksgiving celebration was described. This celebration included the large choir that lined the newly built wall of Jerusalem and sang out with a loud and joyful noise. Before the celebration could start, the priests and the Levites made sure everything and everyone was pure. It was their duty to see that everything was cleansed and set apart.

Our music and singing to God is like an offering to Him, an act of worship and praise. *"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) God wants an offering of praise that is pure and unblemished. Should not music and songs, the offering of our lips and hearts be pure and unblemished? It is a sacrifice of praise and thanks to Him. Before we minister in music, we must see that our hearts are right with God and have been cleansed and set apart to His service. Then we can offer a pure, acceptable offering in His sight.

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." (Psalm 57:7)

Music and a Wrong Heart – Praise that God Will Not Accept

When sacrifices of praise are offered out of a heart that is not right with God, God does not accept this praise. When Israel was in rebellion against God, He said, *"²¹I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. ²²Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. ²³Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."* (Amos 5:21-23) Instead of hearing and accepting their praise, God said, *"But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."* Why? Why would God judge them instead of blessing them when they were praising Him? Because they were worshiping Him with their lips, but they were serving other gods. Verses 25 to 27 explain, *"²⁵Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? ²⁶But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. ²⁷Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity..."* We cannot serve two masters. When our heart is not right with God and our affections are

toward another god, God will not accept our praise and music, even if it is good praise and music. God is very clear, *"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another..."* (Isaiah 42:8)

Music that Mocks

The song of the drunkard.

One characteristic of a drunkard's song is that it makes mockery.

Psalm 58:10-12 says, *"¹⁰When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. ¹¹I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them.*

¹²They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards." When things went poorly for the Psalmist, the drunkards made songs about it and used these songs to mock him.

Pleasant Music

Pleasant music that pleases the Lord is joyful and results in bringing glad praise to God. It reflects a joyful heart. *"Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. ²Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery."* (Psalm 81:1,2)

"¹O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. ²Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. ³For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods." (Psalm 95:1-4)

"¹Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. ²Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. ³Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. ⁴For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." (Psalm 149:1-4)

When pleasant, godly music is played and hearts are rejoicing in the Lord, the mouth is sometimes filled with laughter because God's people are glad. Gladness of heart comes when we know God has saved us – from sin, from trouble, from oppression, or from any other thing from which we were seeking deliverance. *"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. ²Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. ³The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."* (Psalm 126:1-3)

Music Stopped

In contrast to a heart full of music because it is glad at the deliverance of the Lord, good music is often stopped when God's people are oppressed by the enemy, especially if that oppression is due to judgment for their sins. Their hearts are weary and they find it difficult to sing the Lord's song. ¹*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.* ²*We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.* ³*For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.* ⁴*How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?"* (Psalm 137:1-3)

Music is often stopped as well when the heart is heavy. Sometimes when we are grieving, we like to hear the old hymns which speak God's message and peace to the soul. But sometimes the heart is so heavy, that we want quietness. All we can do is fall at the Lord's feet and pour out our tears. *"As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart."* (Proverbs 25:20) *"Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?"* (Psalm 56:8)

History and Instruction Set to Music

See Psalm 78

See Psalm 106

The Psalmist felt it was very important that people did not forget the Lord or what He had done. People often remember things better when they are set to music. God saw that the history of Israel and the great things He had done for them were set to music and preserved in His word so that they would not be forgotten.

Music to Evangelize

¹*O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.* ²*Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.* ³*Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.* ⁴*For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods."* (Psalm 96:1-4)

God's name and wonders are so important that He desires that His name and salvation be sung in all the earth, that it be declared that the LORD is great and greatly to be praised and that He is to be feared above all gods. Music is one of God's evangelistic tools.

God's power to save and the greatness of His name should be known in all the earth. All the earth should break forth in song and praise to Him. *"³He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. ⁴Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise."* (Psalm 98:3,4)

God is to be praised among the people and the nations. His mercy is great above the heavens. His truth reacheth unto the clouds. God is exalted above the heavens and His glory above all the earth. *"O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. ²Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. ³I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. ⁴For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. ⁵Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth."* (Psalm 108:1-5)

See also Psalm 138:1-5. This portion talks about those who will sing praises to God in the future, but it also talks about songs to the Lord that show forth His praises in all the earth. The song of those who know God is a testimony to everyone in the whole earth. *"I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. ²I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. ³In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. ⁴All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth. ⁵Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD."*

The Psalmist's song in Psalm 71 continues to show forth the praise and glory of the LORD, not only to those who are living now but as a testimony to the generations to come. *"¹⁶I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. ¹⁷O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. ¹⁸Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. ¹⁹Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!"* (Psalm 71:16-19)

A practical example of music being used for evangelism is found in Acts 16:25. Paul and Silas were in prison, *"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."* After that there was an earthquake, but none of the prisoners fled. Do you suppose that Paul and Silas' testimony had anything to do with the change in what would have been natural for these prisoners to do – escape while there was opportunity? Later the keeper of the prison got saved and all those in his

household were saved as well. God helped Paul and Silas sing praises to Him when they were in difficulty and pain. As a result, many people heard the praises of God and some were saved.

Music for Romance

The Bible contains one of the most interesting Romance songs ever written. This is the book of the Song of Solomon. It is the love song between Solomon and his wife. It is a love song picturing the love between Jesus and the church. It is not like the vain song of fools (Ecclesiastes 7:5), but it is the song of loves. It is beautiful because it is God's word and pictures Jesus' love for us and ours for Him.

There is another passage in the Bible that talks about music for Romance. This is Hosea chapter 2. Here the love of Hosea to his wayward wife is a picture of the love of God toward wayward Israel. Verses 14,15 say, *"¹⁴Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. ¹⁵And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."*

In the early days of their relationship, Hosea's wife would sing to him. Now other lovers had drawn her away and given many things to her to entice her. Hosea would allure her himself and restore to her her vineyards. Then she would sing to him like she did when she was young.

In the early days of their relationship, God brought Israel up out of Egypt into the wilderness. Israel loved God and sang to Him. (See Exodus 15:1-21) Then God gave to Israel the Promised Land with vineyards and many other beautiful things. After a while, other lovers enticed Israel and drew her away from God with the promise of giving her many things. God longs for the day when Israel will return to Him, and He can restore her vineyards and all her beautiful things to her. Then Israel will sing to Him again, just as she did in the days of her youth.

When love is kept young and alive, there can be beautiful songs of romance between the lovers. It can be kept pure so as to be a song of love, so different from the song of fools. God is thrilled when those who trust in Him sing to Him, and God in turn delights over us with singing. *"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."* (Zephaniah 3:17) So, sing God a song of love today and listen and see if you can't hear Him sing one to you as well.

A New Song

A new song is put in one's heart when God changes a life. Psalm 40:1-3 says, *"I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. ²He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. ³And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD."* Also, consider these words from Isaiah chapter 42, *"⁶I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; ⁷To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. ⁸I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. ⁹Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. ¹⁰Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth..."* (verses 6-10) When people are brought out of the darkness of sin and into the light of new life, God puts a new song in their mouth. Glory and praise no longer goes to the things they used to follow after. Glory and praise now all goes to the LORD, and He will not share it with anyone or anything else. A person who has come out of the darkness of sin and into the marvelous light of new life in Christ Jesus is a new creature. For that person, *"all things have been made new. ¹Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* (II Corinthians 5:17)

Distinction in Musical Sounds

Our new song should have a distinction in musical sounds. What does the Bible say about the sounds our music should have?

"⁷And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? ⁸For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (I Corinthians 14:7,8)

Music is not neutral. The sounds in music should be distinct, depending on what message the music is supposed to get across. Certain sounds of a trumpet were used for battle. If just a general sound was made, nobody knew what the trumpet meant. Other distinctions carry other messages.

Different sounds in music also have a different effect on the emotions and on the human body. This effect can be witnessed by watching some of the concerts by André

Rieu. These can be seen on YouTube. Watch people's reactions. Watch grown men cry. Watch the changes in the moods and actions by the people. Much of André Rieu's music has no words with it, yet it produces a distinct reaction in people because it carries a distinct message.

It is not Okay to say, "It doesn't matter what the music is like as long as it gets the message across." The music will only get the message across it is designed to get across. Godly words added to worldly music does not get across a godly message. One little girl enjoyed listening to a particular group of tenors sing. When she was asked why she enjoyed listening to this group, she replied that the music was "soothing." Music can soothe, excite, bring a feeling of happiness, depress, bring a feeling sadness, produce a care-free feeling, or even cause couples to look at each other in a romantic way. Music can also cause people to laugh (even music with no words in it) or to dance. You can also see the effect of music on the musician's face. This is especially true when the musician is playing the violin. There is something about the violin that causes it to be played with the whole body, feelings, and emotions, not just the fingers; and the effect of the music is expressed in the face.

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs

Our "new song," the music that shows that we have been made new and belong to Christ should consist of songs, hymns, and spiritual songs. *"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."* (Colossians 3:16)

First, our new song (new music) should be Bible based. It should come about as a result of the word of Christ dwelling in us richly. It should dwell in us richly with all wisdom. We can study and put into our hearts the Scriptures found in the book of Proverbs in order to understand wisdom. We can also learn to know Christ more in order to have wisdom. We are to minister to each other with our new music, but first we need to be filled with God's word and with wisdom. *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."* (1 Corinthians 1:30) Christ is our wisdom; therefore, in order to be full of wisdom, we need to know Christ more.

The new song is given to Christians to minister to each other. As we saw above, we cannot minister in this kind of music until we are filled with God's word and wisdom, until we are full of Christ. Once we are filled with God's word, wisdom, and Christ, the new song is used to teach and admonish. It is not just words to fill space or to sound

good or to give us a good feeling. It teaches and admonishes. The new song edifies believers.

“Teaching” is a rather broad term and simply means “to teach.” According to Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, 1913 edition, “teach” means, “To impart the knowledge of; to give intelligence concerning; to inculcate as true or important; to exhibit impressively; as, to *teach* arithmetic, music, or the like; to *teach* morals; to direct; to guide; to instruct; to inform; [for example, to teach a child, or as Jesus teaching His disciples]; to accustom, to guide, to show, to tell; to counsel.” Thus, the subjects the new song can cover are various and myriad. They can teach anything God wants His people to know from Scripture. They instill the knowledge of God and of His word. They help give the knowledge of the holy.

“Admonish” means to “put in mind, to caution, or to reprove gently” (Strong’s Concordance). Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, 1913 edition, defines admonish in this way, “To warn or notify of a fault; to reprove gently or kindly, but seriously; to exhort; To counsel against wrong practices; to caution or advise; to warn against danger or an offense; To instruct or direct; to inform; to notify.

[For example]: Moses was *admonished* of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle -- Hebrews 8: 5.” God wanted to warn Moses that He must make everything according to the pattern God showed Him. It must be just the way God wanted it, without any part of it being his own idea.

Praise to God is a part of our new song. Our new song is a part of our worship to God. But the new song is not just a lot of words about how good or great God is and how much He means to us. That is a part of it. However, the new song should encompass so much more. It should be about and fill up every part of our understanding of the Scriptures and of Christ and be instruction and a form of warning for our Christian walk.

The very next verse in Colossians three says, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*”

(Colossians 3:17) When we sing a song to God at home or in church as a part of our worship or ministry, we should ask ourselves a few questions:

1. Can I do this in the name of Jesus? If Jesus were here physically present or I was standing before Him at the throne of God, would I be able to sing this song?”
2. Does the song glorify God?

3. Does the song give thanks to God or cause us to be thankful to God because of or through the merits of Christ Jesus?

4. Does the song edify other believers?

5. Is the song Scriptural?

6. Does the song manifest a good understanding of Scripture and the wisdom of God's word and of Jesus Christ?

7. Does the song show that we are filled with God's word, with wisdom, and with Christ Himself?

We see that good, godly music is a very serious thing. It is holy and not to be taken lightly. It is to be done God's way, not by our own idea. It is not Okay to take good words and add it to any tune that fits. The music must have distinctive sound and carry the message of the words to the hearers. It must be known what is piped or harped (or played on piano or on violin and so forth).

May God take this study and work deep down inside our hearts and cause us to draw closer to Him. May it help us to see how holy and sacred is the new song and the ministry of godly music. May God help us to grow more and more in Him through the music that we feed into our minds and hearts.