

115 The Sound of Music

Set deep within human hearts is the desire to make music and to sing. Throughout humanity we find this universal instinct to reach for those instruments, to get playing them, and to get singing, clapping and dancing.

Being so widespread, and coming from our hearts as it does, music is a very clear indicator of what is really going on in the hearts and the lives of the music makers. The nature of the music being produced, be it in a great concert hall or cathedral, or round a camp fire or under a railway arch - the tunes and rhythms, the words and mood - all speak of our perceptions as to "the way things are".

The first mention of music scripturally is in Genesis 4.21, where we learn of Jubal, "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ (AV) / flute (NIV)" - probably some sort of pan-pipes so both "organ" and "flute" are on the right lines. In Exodus 15 we read of Moses and the children of Israel singing that great song of praise to the Lord for His deliverance of His people through the Red Sea. Then in I Chronicles 15 and following we learn of the return of the ark to the city of David - see 15.16-22, 25-28 / 16.4-end - what a holy noise they made, what a party they had!

As the New Covenant, of salvation by faith in Christ alone, fulfilled the Old Covenant, of salvation by obedience to the Law, the music traditions continued and developed. For example, the Holy Spirit tells us through Paul, ".... Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph 5.18-19); and then again, with a slightly different emphasis (Col 3.16) " teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord". In James 5.13 - "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms!".

We get the message - music has a key part to play in our worship of the living God, and in our mutual encouragement of one another and our spiritual growth together. A music-less faith is an impoverished faith, and needlessly so.

Like all other aspects of our worship of the Lord, music needs to be kept in its rightful place. How very, very easy it is for music to take over our worship, and to become a "be-all and end-all" in itself - an error that can occur whatever the place or the style of worship. The cathedrals uphold a great musical tradition - organs, choirs, hymns, anthems, settings - beautifully composed and delivered

music that has stood the test of time: but it can all become a show and a sham if our hearts are not right. Many new fellowships in Britain meet in school halls or cinemas, with their music groups and their ever-new, emotion-based songs sung many times over: here too, it can all become a show and a sham if our hearts are not right.

Are the music-makers, entrusted with such weighty responsibility in leading our sung worship, God-fearing, competent, discreet, and serving rather than dominating? Are their precious God-given gifts being used as intended, for the glory of God and for the edifying of His people? Are the words set before us to sing biblically sound, truly God-honouring and God-naming, expressing the right relationship between Almighty God and His Christ-redeemed children? And are the people and the musicians properly sharing together in the genuine worship of Almighty God, "in spirit and in truth"?

We close this time with that most wonderful passage, (Revelation 15.2-3, AV) - "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints".

How about that for "the sound of music"?! - and it's in the present tense! They are singing God's praises right now - so we'd better join in!

© 2015 Faithful Sheep Ministries - www.fsmins.org