

Music - For Better or For Worse

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Music is the art of arranging the sounds of voice (s) or instrument (s) or both in a pleasing sequence or combination (Oxford Dictionary, Third Edition 1988).

Whether a musical work is pleasing is open to interpretation due to the fact that everyone has their own preferences. For instance, some prefer to listen to classical music while others prefer to listen to more modern idioms.

However, whatever style of music is being performed, there can be either a positive or negative effect based on the underlying message or mood behind the composition. For instance, when King Saul of ancient Israel was depressed or angry, melodic music revived him and temporarily changed his attitude,

But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him. And Saul's servants said to him, "Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well" (1Sam. 16:14-16; NKJV throughout unless noted).

And so it was whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him (1Sam. 16:23).

It is important to note that King Saul had rebelled against Almighty God prior to David being asked to play for him, and as a result God's Holy Spirit had been removed from him because it cannot co-exist with anyone who chooses to rebel against His law and commands (1Sam. 15:10-11; cf. Mt. 7:21-23; Ac. 5:32; Rom. 8:7-8; 1Pt. 1:2; Ps. 119:155).

If someone receives God's Holy Spirit and then rejects God's way of living, as described in His law, commandments, and testimony, that individual is once again exposed to the influences of the Adversary. The apostle Paul described this process to the brethren in Corinth,

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father's wife (stepmother)! And you (brethren in Corinth) are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged, as though I were present, concerning him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan (i.e. distressing spirit) for the destruction of the flesh, that his

spirit may be saved in the (judgment) day of the Lord Jesus (1Cor. 5:1-5; emphasis added; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In the example of King Saul, it is interesting that the distressing spirit left Saul when David played melodic music. This harmonious music changed Saul's attitude to the point that he became more positive, which made it impossible for a demon to co-exist with him. There is an old saying that, 'birds of a feather flock together' and this principle applies to any music that evokes a negative mood because it can lead to a person becoming so depressed or enter such a negative state of mind that they are open to the influence of fallen angels, who also have a negative mindset. This negative attitude among the fallen host has continued since their rebellion against Almighty God. They were not always in this frame of mind as scripture reveals. God described the positive attitude that permeated the angelic realm until some rebelled under the influence of Satan (Rev. 12:4,9),

To what were its (the Earth's) foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars (cf. Rev. 22:16; Isa. 14:12) sang together, and all the sons (angels) of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:6-7; Ed. notes in parentheses).

At this point in time, the Morning Stars (1Thes. 4:16; Jude 9) sang together which proves that joyful and harmonious music originated in the heavenly realm. It appears that the Morning Stars were responsible for leading others in musical activities. One of these Morning Stars later gave up his position in the heavenly realm to become mortal (human) in order to offer himself as a sinless sacrifice to cover the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29) while another Morning Star, named Lucifer, rebelled and became the Adversary, or Satan,

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I (Jesus Christ) am the Root and Offspring of (King) David, the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16; cf. 2Pt. 1:19; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer (Day Star), son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! (Isa. 14:12; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

The Morning Star who became Satan was originally created with musical talents,

You (Satan) were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created (Eze. 28:13; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

When he was created, Lucifer had musical talents as part of his inherent traits. Timbrels represent his rhythmic attributes while pipes represent his melodic skills. After his rebellion against Almighty God, he would no longer be involved with music around Almighty God's throne. However, this does not preclude his musical activities among those he has been able to deceive, which include the other fallen host and the majority of mankind (Rev. 12:4, 9). Therefore, music itself can be a tool that Satan uses to manipulate and deceive those under his

influence. When necessary he can even resort to working with melodic music, if it serves his purpose. After all, Satan knows that mankind also has varying degrees of musical interest and ability that he can broadcast to,

And you He (Almighty God) made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins (cf. 1 Jn. 3:4), in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

An important aspect of broadcasting music to people is implanting lyrics that serve Satan's purpose. For instance it is very difficult, even for someone with a limited interest in music, to ignore Christmas carols and songs when they are being played in restaurants, shopping malls, public buildings, etc. The majority of people who hear these every year are able to repeat some of the lyrics verbatim. This is a powerful tool that helps brainwash people into believing that Christmas (Jer. 10:1-5) is something worthwhile and positive when in fact it is a blatant lie that Satan has foisted on mankind and wants to perpetuate as long as he is able to get away with it (see study; Placing God's Name On Pagan Practices),

You (religious leadership during Christ's ministry) are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it (Jn. 8:44; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Christmas music proves how skillful Satan is in his work of deception. He has the whole world 'dancing to his tunes.' In essence, Satan is like the piper who captures people with his songs and they blindly follow along.

A great deal of music today caters to those aspects of human nature that run contrary to the will of Almighty God (Rom. 8:7-8). Some of this music promotes rebellion against the law and commandments of God. Many songs and music videos picture scenes that advocate sexual immorality in a number of different forms. Producers and artists of these works either knowingly or not have to compromise any values they have in order to earn a reputation and living from this industry. Even so-called Christian music can promote wrong values either in the mood of their music or the lyrics, especially if the message is Biblically incorrect. In many cases, there is a misunderstanding of what God expects from those who claim to know him (Mt. 7:21-24). Writing religious sounding lyrics does not make a song somehow acceptable to God,

For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if he ministers (servants) also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works (2Cor. 11:14a-15).

Making money from selling so-called Christian music is not acceptable to God either because his word is to be provided free of charge,

Freely you have received, freely give (Mt. 10:8b).

Even hymns sung during religious services can have lyrics that are contrary to the will of God as expressed in His law and commandments. For example, some hymns of praise are directed to Jesus Christ, which is contrary to the first commandment. Jesus Christ is not Almighty God (Jn. 17:3). Instead, he is the Angel of God who gave up his position as a Morning Star (Rev. 22:16) in order to become a sinless sacrifice. All worship is to be directed to God the Father as Christ clearly stated (Mt. 6:6ff),

You shall have no other gods before Me (Almighty God) (Ex. 20:3).

In contrast, Almighty God wants His people singing songs that help them remember the great works of salvation that He has performed for them. One of these great works was the release of ancient Israel from the enormous burden of working as slaves in Egypt, and Israel sang about this amazing event after it was over,

Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him (Ex. 15:1-2 ff; emphasis added).

They not only sang songs of praise and thanksgiving, they also danced as an expression of their joy,

Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!" (Ex. 15:20-21).

In like manner, King David expressed his joy when the Ark of the Covenant returned to Jerusalem,

So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab drove the new cart (2Sam. 6:3).

Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the Lord on all kinds of instruments made of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on coronets, and on cymbals (2Sam. 6:5).

Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet (2Sam. 6:14-15).

David also composed songs to express his deep appreciation for God's law and commandments,

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! They also do no iniquity (cf. 1Jn. 3:4); they walk in His ways. You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments (Ps. 119:1-6).

With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! (Ps. 119:10).

In contrast to David's rejoicing before Almighty God when the Ark of the Covenant was delivered to Jerusalem, the people of Israel had previously celebrated their release from Egyptian slavery by giving credit to a foreign god instead of the Only True God (Jn. 17:3) and celebrating on a day that was not commanded by God. This practice continues today when people celebrate festivals on pagan days of worship, such as Christmas, New Year's Day, and Easter, instead of the days that God commands them to observe (Lev. 23:2, 4, 37, 44; see section – God's Holy Days),

So all the people (of Israel) broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then he said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play (Ex. 32:3-6; Ed. note in parenthesis).

And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp." But he (Moses) said: "It is not the voice of those who shout in victory, nor is it the voice of those who cry out in defeat, but the voice of those who sing (SHD 6030) that I hear." So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets (containing God's law and commandments) out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain (Ex. 32:17-19; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

When Moses saw that the nation of Israel had broken the agreement or covenant they had just made with Almighty God (Ex. 24:3), he broke the tablets which symbolized this breach that God later compared to a divorce (Jer. 3:8). Part of the agreement that Israel had made included worshipping Almighty God on the days that He set apart (Ex. 23:10-19). Instead of obeying this command, Israel created their own days of worship that resembled the ones they were used to keeping in Egypt. The descendants of ancient Israel (not just the descendants of the tribe of Judah) do the same thing today when they observe the pagan festivals mentioned previously.

Going back to the scripture in Exodus 32:18, the Hebrew word translated into "sing" is from SHD # 6030, which is quite different from the word translated "sing" in Exodus 15:1 (SHD # 2176). In Exodus 15:1, the Israelites were rejoicing and

giving thanks to Almighty God for bringing them out of captivity. However, in Exodus 32:18 they were directing their praise toward a foreign god from a false religious system just as most do today when they participate in pagan customs that permeate most societies.

As is the case with many pagan celebrations today, there is a great deal of partying, noise and frivolity during which many restraints are cast off (Hos. 4:1-2). According to Joshua's comment to Moses even the sounds from Israel's camp could not be distinguished as musical. Instead, they were a loud noise,

And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp." (Ex. 32:17)

From this, it can be deduced that the people were not rejoicing with music that was positive and uplifting. Instead, it would have been a more negative style of music that was being played either in its composition or lyrics, and described as a noise by Joshua. This mood is befitting the circumstances because the people had just broken the commandments of Almighty God (Ex. 20:1-5) and were clearly under the influence of the Adversary who walks contrary to the will of God.

In contrast, there was a time when some of the descendants of Israel observed one of God's Holy Days correctly and the result was very positive and joyful,

So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing to the Lord, accompanied by loud instruments (2Chr. 30:21).

So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His (Almighty God's) holy dwelling place, to heaven (2Chr. 30:26-27; Ed. note in parenthesis).

It is God's desire that mankind rejoice and continue to be happy. This is why He gave them His law and commandments including His Holy Days (Lev. 23:37-40). It is only by obedience to God's Holy Days that anyone can understand His plan that will lead to everlasting life for those who repent of sin (Ac. 2:38). Knowing that there is more than just this temporary physical existence is a great reason to rejoice. God's festival of Tabernacles, or Booths, pictures events associated with the end of His plan, which explains why there is rejoicing associated with this festival,

And you shall take for yourselves on the first day (of the Feast of Tabernacles) the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days (Lev. 23:40; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

These temporary shelters made of branches were to picture our temporary physical existence. God made ancient Israel dwell in temporary booths prior to

entering the Promised Land (Lev. 23:42-43). In like manner, mankind is dwelling in temporary dwellings (physical bodies) waiting to enter the promise of God's kingdom, which the apostle Paul describes as God's rest,

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it (Heb. 4:1; emphasis added).

For if Joshua had given them (Israel) rest, then He (Almighty God) would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God (Heb. 4:8-9; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience (Heb. 4:11; emphasis added).

Coming up to the fulfillment of what the Feast of Tabernacles pictures, the loyal angels and spiritual elders in heaven will sing a new song of praise that reflects the positive result of Almighty God's plan to redeem all who have sinned,

And they sang a new song, saying" "You (Christ) are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to (Almighty) God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us (them) kings and priests to our God; and we (they) shall reign on earth." (Rev. 5:9-10; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Those of the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6), pictured in two of God's Holy Days, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost, will also sing songs of praise and thanksgiving,

And I (John) saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have victory over the beast (symbol of Satan and his system of government), over his image and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints (nations)! Who shall not fear You, O Lord and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You (cf. Zech.14:16ff), for Your judgments have been manifested" (Rev. 15:2-4; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

It appears that the song of the Lamb mentioned above is a new song that Jesus Christ teaches those who have recognized his appointed leadership and have followed his example of obedience to the law and commandments of Almighty God (cf. Mt.17:5; 2Pt. 1:17),

Then I (John) looked, and behold, a (the) Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women (symbol of false religions), for they are virgins (cf. 2Cor. 11:2). These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first-

fruits (pictured by God's Holy Day called Pentecost) to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile (falsehood – Rev. 14:1-5a; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Music is a gift from Almighty God. He created it to be an uplifting experience, and when using music to express thanksgiving to God it should always reflect His values which include being positive. In times of sorrow, uplifting music can be very encouraging (Eccl. 3:4).

Listening to negative, or discordant, music and or lyrics for an extended period of time can contribute to depression or feelings of aggression or anger, which in turn can leave an individual open to the influence of the Adversary.

The apostle Peter warned that we need to protect our minds from anything that can cause us to go astray from God's truth,

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober... (1Pt. 1:13a).

... you also be holy in all your conduct (1Pt. 1:15b).

Even music that sounds positive and uplifting can be deceiving if the message of the lyric is one of rebellion against the law and commandments of God. Again, Christmas music falls into this category. That is why those, who claim to follow Almighty God, must be vigilant and examine what they are participating in, and whether it is in accordance with the will of God.

It is all too easy to fall under the assumption that one's current understanding of Biblical theology is correct because it is consistent with their upbringing, their church's teaching, or personal interpretation. If an individual does have errors in understanding and is unaware they exist, it is extremely difficult for them to recognize the truth due to the fact that when they are exposed to the truth they will judge it to be incompatible with their current understanding, and, consequently dismiss it as false,

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God (1Jn. 4:1a).

Be sober (self-disciplined), be vigilant (watchful); because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1Pt. 5:8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It is clear that negative or discordant music will not be part of the kingdom of God because every tear, which represents negative emotions, will be wiped away,

He (Almighty God) will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces (Isa. 25:8a; Ed. note in parenthesis).

“for the Lamb (Christ) who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

(Rev. 7:17; Ed. note in parenthesis)

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Rev. 21:4)

Musical talent was created in Lucifer, but since he rebelled against his Creator he can use it to harm and deceive. Those who are striving to serve Almighty God need to be aware of his tactics and guard themselves (1Pt. 5:8).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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