

Spiritual Considerations...

Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.



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number 12

Don't Tell Me What, Tell Me Why

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I admit that I have always been a person asking the question "why?" I can't help it. I admit watching people and wondering why they act in certain ways. I'm sure some think the same of me. Recently, Jerry Lee, one of our elders, gave me a copy of the following article that I thought expressed my concern as well as any I have read. The following is a revised excerpt.

"The U.S. standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 ft., 8 1/2 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and the U.S. railroads were built by English expatriates.

Why did the English people build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing. Okay?

Why did the wagons use that odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagons would break on some of the old, long distance roads, because that's the spacing of the old wheel ruts. So who built these old rutted roads? The first long distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for the benefit of their legions. The roads have been used ever since. And the ruts? The initial ruts, which everyone else uses, were made by Roman chariots. Since the chariots were made for or by Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the manner of wheel spacing. Thus, we have the answer to the original question. The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 ft., 8 1/2 inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman army war chariot. Specifications and bureaucracies live forever. The Imperial Roman chariots were made to be just wide enough to accommodate the back ends of two war horses.

Now, the twist to the story...there's an interesting extension of the story about railroad gauges. When we see a space shuttle sitting on the launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are the solid rocket boosters, or SRB's. The SRB's are made by Thiokol at a factory in Utah. The engineers who designed the SRB's might have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRB's had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line to the factory runs through a tunnel in the mountains. The SRB's had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than a railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses. So a major design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was determined by the width of two horses standing side by side."

-excerpt from *Ohio Buckeye*

Does this sound familiar? I think the above article has spiritual implications for Christians. While we consider our individual and collective actions, let's not forget to evaluate our motivation.

- What are we, as Christians, trying to accomplish in our service to God? Why?
- Are we sincerely interested in spiritual growth, or are we caught up in perpetuating an opinion? Why?
- Do we sincerely want to win people to the Lord, or do we want to protect long-held and cherished beliefs? Why?
- Are we willing to view the Bible as authoritative, or must our own perspectives rule? Why?
- Do we have confidence in a sovereign, all-powerful, all-knowing, always-present God, or do we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. Why?
- Do we submit to God, or do we submit to enough of his will to be comfortable? Why?

The Discipline of Study

“He that studies only men, will get the body of knowledge without the soul; and he that studies only books, the soul without the body. He that to what he sees, adds observation, and to what he reads, reflection, is on the right road to knowledge, provided that in scrutinizing the hearts of others, he neglects not his own.” Caleb Colton, **Spiritual Disciplines**, p. 62.

Instrumental Music in Churches

(McGarvey, J.W., “Instrumental Music in Churches,” **Millennial Harbinger** 35 (1864), 510-514.)

“In the earlier years of the present Reformation, there was entire unanimity in the rejection of instrumental music from our public worship. It was declared unscriptural, inharmonious with the Christian-institution, and a source of corruption. In the course of time, individuals have here and there called into question the correctness of this decision, and an attempt was occasionally made to introduce instrument in some churches. It was at first a sufficient objection to such attempts, that a large portion of the congregation were offend by them, and that the Scriptures forbid giving offense to the brethren. But more recently, congregations have been found who are almost, if not altogether unanimous in favor of instruments, and upon the principle of church independence, they have assumed the right to make use of them without regard to the wishes of other congregations. If the practice is in itself innocent, then these congregations act upon a correct principle, and others have no right to interfere or complain. Moreover, in that case, the taste and judgment of the majority in every congregation ought to rule, and the minority should cheerfully acquiesce. This state of things changes somewhat the practical character of the issue, and places it before us as an original question. As such, we must discuss it upon its merits; we must call in, for the time, our former decision, renew the original investigation; lay aside all feeling pro and con, and start anew the inquiry, Ought we to make use of musical instruments in public worship?

By what standard shall we judge this question? If there is any Scriptural authority upon the subject, then of course we must hear that first; if not, then expediency must supply the test. If the Scriptures leave us at liberty, we must decide whether to exercise the liberty of using the instruments or the liberty of disusing them, according as experience and sound judgment may dictate. But if the Scriptures do not leave us at liberty, then we have no right to appeal to expediency, except for the purpose of vindicating the decision of the Scriptures.

If these observations are correct, our first, and it may be, our final appeal is to the word of God. To this we confine the present article.

It is sometimes assumed by the advocates of instrumental music, that the Scriptures do furnish authority in its favor. They find this authority in the fact that instruments were used in the temple worship of the Jews, and that they are also represented as being used by the angels in heaven. In view of these two facts, two questions are propounded: first, can that be wrong in the Christian congregation, which was acceptable to God in the Jewish congregation? I answer, it may be. The offering of victims, the sprinkling of blood, the burning of incense, and the perpetual light of burning lamps were acceptable to God in Jewish worship; but they are not in Christian worship; and so may instrumental music not be. But in view of the second fact, it is asked, can that be wrong among saints on earth, which is right among saints and angels in heaven? I answer again, it may be. Angels and saints in glory may be granted privileges, which ought not to be granted to men in the flesh; for that may be harmless there, which would be dangerous here, as children must be denied privileges which older persons may enjoy with impunity. If, then, the inhabitants of heaven do literally use harps of gold, which may well be doubted, it may still be unsafe and improper that harps or any other musical instruments should be used in Christian congregations.

How, then, are we to decide whether a certain element in Jewish worship, or in the worship of heaven, is acceptable in the Christian church? Undoubtedly we are to decide it by the teaching of the New Testament, which is the only rule of practice for Christians. Whatever is authorized by this teaching is right, and whatever it condemns is wrong in us, whether it belong to the service of the Jews or the service of the angels.”