

December 8, 2024

# The View

*“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” – John 12:21*

## Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God’s word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly “headquarters.” The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don’t understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God’s word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

*We do not solicit donations from visitors. Please fill out a visitor’s card and put it in the collection plate when it is passed. See page 4 for more information.*

## Schedule

### The Lord’s Day

#### 9:30 AM Bible Classes

*Auditorium: Ecclesiastes*

*Young Adult Class (room 12): “Acts, Sharing Our Faith”*

*Room 13/14: “Relationships”*

#### 10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today: Zac Brown

*“Doing the Little Things”*

*Livestream at 9:30 & 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>*

### Sunday Afternoon and Evening Bible Classes @ the Building

*1:30 PM, Genesis (see Grant Mulligan)*

*5 PM, Praying the Psalms (Auditorium)*

#### Additional Classes

High School Class, 5 PM on Sundays @ David & Christie Posey’s home

Young people monthly meeting (middle school): contact David Sanderson

([david.r.sanderson@intel.com](mailto:david.r.sanderson@intel.com)) or Seth Reagan ([sethreagan@gmail.com](mailto:sethreagan@gmail.com))

**There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members.**

**Check with David Posey, Len Baker or one of the elders.**

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday Men’s Bible Study: 7 to 8 AM

Bel Air Market on Bidwell in Folsom. “Iron sharpens iron” (Proverbs 27:17). Mentoring (Titus 2:1-6).

### Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Same classes as Sunday, 9:30 AM

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Articles published in the View reflect only the thoughts and opinions of the author alone, not necessarily the editor, the elders or any member of the church at Folsom.

# “Music” in the New Testament

BY DAVID POSEY

Like most of you, I love music. Given my age, some may be surprised at the songs in my Spotify playlist. Except for hymns and a couple of acappella secular songs, all of the songs on my playlist use instrumental music. On many, it is the instruments that make the music enjoyable to listen to. But I never listen to secular music to learn more about God and his word or use it to “teach and admonish” others – and *that’s the primary reason we sing hymns in worship* (Colossians 3:16).

God loves music. In the Old Testament, we read about the use of instruments but that was under a different covenant and a different kingdom. Music in the new covenant and in the kingdom of Christ has a different form and purpose. That’s clear in the texts in the New Testament that mention music. The terms sing, sung, and singing are found only in the following texts:

- “And when they had **sung** a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” (Mt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26)
- “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and **singing** hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” (Acts 16:25)
- “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and **sing** to Your name.” (Rom. 15:9)
- “I will **sing** with the spirit, and I will also **sing** with the understanding.” (1 Cor. 14:15)
- “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (Eph. 5:18-19)
- “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.” (Col. 3:16)
- “I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will **sing** praise to You.” (Heb. 2:12)
- “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him **sing** psalms.” (Jas. 5:13)

## The purpose of congregational singing

In the texts cited above, three speak directly to the purpose of singing: Jas. 5:13, Eph. 5:18-19 and Col. 3:16. James 5:13 teaches that singing is a way we express a cheerful heart and is even a form of prayer. Praise involves exalting and thanking God, something we typically do in our singing; the Psalms, especially, emphasize this aspect of our worship.

Eph. 5:18-19 and Col. 3:16 are parallel passages that, together, tell us that (1) singing is one way we are “filled with the spirit” and allow Christ’s word to dwell in us; (2) in singing together we edify each other by speaking to each other in our singing, teaching and admonishing (warning) each other; (3) we are to sing “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” – i.e., songs with spiritual content; (4) singing must come from the heart – that is the sphere in which we “make melody.”

With the exception of singing of the Psalms as written, the songs and hymns we sing are not inspired by God, though in many cases are “inspired” poetry (in the human sense). It is hard to fathom a world without

some of the beautiful songs we sing today. However, we should remember the purpose of singing and remember that for hundreds of years, most songs were most likely in the form of chants. The lilting or haunting melodies that move us today are of relatively late vintage.

We should also remember that any song written by a man or a woman might have unscriptural elements.

Though we understand the concept of “poetic license” (the liberty a writer takes in expression), the content of the song must still be truthful

(one older preacher asked, “so, who issues these ‘poetic licenses’?” Good point). The elders must be watchful in this regard; singing a lie is no different than speaking one. The song books we use have greatly reduced the potential for unscriptural messages. The book we use at Folsom, for example, is edited by two faithful men, Dane Shepard and the late R. J. Stevens. They are committed to the truth. Sometimes, though, a verse or two of a song may be in doubt. If we are unsure, there is nothing sinful about singing fewer verses than the song has, whether because the omitted verses are doubtful, or because it is more convenient to do so.

When a visitor comes to one of our assemblies he or she may notice, almost immediately, that there are no instruments of music that accompany the singing. Today, churches of Christ are in a tiny minority of churches that abstain from using the instrument. Yet, there is broad admission by historians and religious scholars that instrumental music was not used in the early days of the church and most admit that the passages cited above do not envision its use (*see examples on page 3*).

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# The History of the Use of Instrumental Music in Churches

I've heard some say that the argument from history regarding actions in churches is not conclusive. Of course not, but it provides evidence of gradual movement away from the scriptures and that is valuable information. – dp  
“There is no record in the NT of the use of instruments in the musical worship of the church.” – “Music,” Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, p. 1163

“The church rings with the noise of trumpets, pipes and dulcimers; and human voices strive to bear their part with them. Men run to the church as to a theater, to have their ears tickled.” – Martin Luther

“Men still living can remember the time when organs were very seldom found outside the Church of England... if we read the future by the past, we can hardly doubt that, in a few years, unaccompanied singing will very seldom be heard. Yet, even in the Church of England itself, organs did not obtain admission without much controversy.” –  
John Spencer Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music*, p. 179, published in 1901.

“The primitive Christian community held the same view, as we know from the apostolic and post-apostolic literature: **instrumental music was thought unfit for religious services**; the Christian sources are outspoken in their **condemnation of instrumental performances**. Originally, **only song was considered worthy of direct approach to Divinity**.” – “The Music of Post-Biblical Judaism,” *The New Oxford History of Music*, Vol. I, p. 135

**Edward Dickinson:** “While the Greek and Roman songs were metrical, the Christian psalms were antiphons, prayers, responses, etc., were unmetrical; and while the pagan melodies were always sung to an instrumental accompaniment, **the church chant was exclusively vocal**.” – *Music in the History of the Western Church*, p. 54

**Frank Landon Humphreys:** “One of the features which distinguishes the Christian religion from almost all others is its quietness; it aims to repress the outward signs of inward feeling. The early Christians discouraged all outward signs of excitement, and from the very beginning, in the music they used, reproduced the spirit of their religion – an inward quietude. **All the music employed in their early services was vocal**.” – *Evolution of Church Music*, p. 42

**Dr. Frederic Louis Ritter:** “We have no real knowledge of the exact character of the music which formed a part

of the religious devotion of the first Christian congregations. It was, however, **purely vocal. Instrumental music was excluded**, at first, as having been used by the Romans at their depraved festivities; and everything reminding them of heathen worship could not be endured by the new religionists.”

– “History Of Music From The Christian Era To The Present Time,” p. 28

**Lars P. Qualben:** “Singing formed an essential part of the Christian worship, but it was **in unison and without musical accompaniment**.”

– *A History Of The Christian Church*, p. 112

**Joseph Otten:** “For almost a thousand years Gregorian chant, without any instrumental or harmonic addition was the only music used in connection with the liturgy. The organ, in its primitive and rude form, was the first, and for a long time the sole, instrument used to accompany the chant” – *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913, Vol. 10, p. 657

**James Pierce:** “I come now to say somewhat of the antiquity of musical instruments. But that these were not used in the Christian Church in the primitive times is attested by all the ancient writers with one consent... From what has been said, it appears no musical instruments were used in the pure times of the church.”

– *A Vindication Of The Dissenters*, n.d.

**George A. Klingman:** “The earliest reference is to the use of the flute and the harp **in the second century**. At Alexandria, Clement (155-220 A.D.) forbade the use of the flute, on the ground that it was ‘too worldly’ and substituted the harp. Ambrose is said to have introduced instrumental music in the West **in the fourth century**.” – *Church History For Busy People*, pp. 92-93

**The American Cyclopedic:** “Pope Vitalian is related to have first introduced organs into some of the churches of Western Europe about 670 but the earliest trustworthy account is that of one sent as a present by the Greek emperor Constantine to Pepin, king of the Franks, in 755.” – Vol. 12, p. 688

**Chambers’ Encyclopedia:** “The organ is said to have been introduced into church music by Pope Vitalian I in 666. In 757, a great organ was sent as a present to Pepin by the Byzantine emperor, Constantine, and placed in the church of St. Corneille at Compiègne.” – Vol. 7, p. 112

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*Frank Landon Humphreys, Evolution of Church Music*