

Speak vs. Strike

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God has always demanded that people follow His commands without alteration or deviation. The reader will recall that when Moses was leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, Moses obeyed God's command to strike the rock so it would bring forth water (Exo. 17:5-6). Moses was later instructed to speak to the rock, but instead, he struck the rock (Num. 20:7-11). Just because God had authorized him to strike the rock in the past, that did not give Moses the authority to strike the rock again. He had to obey the current command that God had given, exactly as it had been given, regardless of what God had commanded or authorized in the past.

Although some may try to minimize disobedience to such a command, God did not view this disobedience as something trivial. This was sin, and God said it demonstrated a lack of belief in Him: "...*Because ye believed me not...*" (Num. 20:12). God also said that this disobedience showed that He had not been sanctified: "...*Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel...*" (Num. 20:12). To disobey God is to reveal that we have not set God apart in our minds, thinking of Him in a special way, considering Him to be infinitely above us in every way, One who is worthy to be obeyed, and One who will punish the disobedient. Because of his disobedience, Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land of Canaan: "...*therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them*" (Num. 20:12; cf. Deut. 3:23-28; 34:1-5). Disobedience demonstrates a lack of faith and sanctification, and it also demands punishment from the Omni-just God.

Is it possible to commit a sin like this today? Under the New Testament, God has not commanded us to speak to a rock, but He has commanded us to "speak" in the music we offer Him: "*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*" (Eph. 5:19; cf. Matt. 26:30; Acts 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:15; Col. 3:16-17; Heb. 2:12; James 5:13). When we obey the command to sing, we are "*speaking,*" and the "*melody*" is made in the "*heart.*" Since God has commanded us to "*speak,*" we are not authorized to "*strike*" the keys of a piano, the strings of a guitar, or the head of a drum in worship.

Many who use mechanical instruments in worship claim that since God authorized mechanical instruments in the worship of the past (Old Testament), we can still do this with God's approval under the New Testament. The truth is that just because God may have authorized something in the past, that does not mean that He authorizes such today. Should we not have learned that lesson from Moses' disobedience and punishment? To use mechanical instruments in worship today is like Moses striking the rock after God commanded him to speak to it! It is something that is no longer authorized by God. Such disregard for God's clear commands in the New Testament demonstrates a lack of belief and sanctification of God. May we all be content with God's command to "*speak*" so that we may enter "*the promised land*" of Heaven!

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