

Is Hand Clapping in the Church Scriptural?

Why do some clap their hands (applaud) during the worship of the church? Some clap when they agree with a point the preacher has made. Some applaud when he finishes his sermon. This is to show their approval of it. However, there is no Scriptural authority for hand clapping in the worship of the church! One of the principles which will help us understand the Lord's will for worship is to "speak where the Scriptures speak, and to remain silent where the Scriptures are silent." In other words, when the Lord teaches us by a command, approved example, or implication in His Word, we have authority to do it. If He does not, then we are doing it without His authority.

What is the proper way to show agreement or approval in worship? The answer is found in 1 Corinthians 14:16. Paul wrote: *"Else if thou bless with the spirit, how shall he that filleth the place of the unlearned say the Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he knoweth not what thou sayest?"* The manner of Paul's question implies that the proper way to show agreement is to say **"Amen."** Even though this passage is dealing with the miraculous spiritual gifts of the apostolic age, it clearly shows how the Lord expects His disciples

to show agreement today.

If God had simply said, "Show agreement," then hand clapping, whistling, or anything else could be done to accomplish it. However, God did not simply say "Show agreement!" He said to say **"Amen"** to show approval or agreement. This principle is clearly seen in Genesis 6:14. The Lord told Noah to *"Make thee an ark of gopher wood."* Since God commanded the specific kind of wood to be used, no other kind could have been used with His approval. Since, in the New Testament, God has commanded the way to show approval or agreement in worship is by saying "Amen," then no other way can be used with His approval! God does not have to say, "Thou shalt not practice hand clapping or any other thing except to say 'amen.'" When He commanded saying "Amen," this eliminated (left out) every other way of doing it!

The apostle Paul wrote: *"And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"* (Colossians 3:17). To do a thing *"in the name of the Lord"* means to do it by His authority. Therefore, we must have authority for everything we do in our worship and practice. Where is the verse which gives us authority for hand clapping in worship? It is not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament!

Please consider the following arguments from the Word of God:

Argument I

1. All Scripture is given to thoroughly equip the man of God for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

2. No Scripture authorizes hand clapping in the worship of the church.

3. Therefore, hand clapping is not a good work!

Argument II

1. It is a violation of Scripture to go beyond what is written (Revelation 22:18,19; 2 John 9).

2. Hand clapping in the worship of the church is not written in the New Testament.

3. Therefore, hand clapping in the worship of the church is a violation of the New Testament!

Argument III

1. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). *"And whatsoever is not of faith is sin"* (Romans 14:23).

2. The Word of God does not mention hand clapping in the worship of the church.

3. Therefore, hand clapping is not an act of faith and is a sin!

Argument IV

1. God has given us *"all things that pertain unto life and godliness"* through His

Word (2 Peter 1:3).

2. God's Word does not give us anything concerning hand clapping in the worship of the church.

3. *Therefore, hand clapping in the church does not pertain to life and godliness!*

Some try to justify hand clapping in the worship of the church by arguing, "It is mentioned in the Old Testament." While this is true (see Psalm 47:1), this does not authorize it in the worship of the church today. We are under the New Testament law of worship. The Old Testament Law was for Israel and has been replaced by a new and better covenant (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 7:12; 8:6-13). The fact that hand clapping was commanded in Old Testament worship does not authorize it in New Testament worship any more than the fact that the burning of incense and the offering of animal sacrifices in Old Testament worship gives authority for them in New Testament worship. We are not under the Old Testament law of worship today! If one leaves out the offering of animal sacrifices and burning of incense, he must also leave out hand clapping.

Some try to justify hand clapping in the worship of the church today by insisting that it is a matter of option. One can choose to do it, or one can choose not to do it. But if it is an option, why not leave it out? Many Christians cannot do it in good conscience. If it is not commanded, but

merely a matter of option, then it should not be used for this will cause division. Those who oppose hand clapping in worship do not believe it is an optional matter. They oppose it because it is an addition to the God given pattern of worship in the New Testament.

When we worship God, we must simply follow that which He has revealed to us in the New Testament. Hand clapping as an act of worship is not revealed in the New Testament. Therefore, in order to please God, we must leave it out of our worship! God demands respect for His Word. To add to it or to take away from it is to incur the wrath of God. It will result in one's being kept out of the Holy City (Heaven) (Revelation 22:18-19).



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