

SHOULD A CHRISTIAN LISTEN TO GOSPEL RAP MUSIC?



An excerpt from a secular news article mocking Christians adopting contemporary music trends.

Let me say from the outset that music is not a bad thing, but that good things can be corrupted. Since the 60s 'counter-culture', and earlier, certain forms of music have been used to promote an anti-God (and his standards) and a pro-sin agenda. The music industry is one of the things the Devil uses to entice and tempt into sin, especially the young. It's an old tactic, there's nothing really new under the sun.

Recent history

Rap music is not young anymore. It was born in New York city. So how did it start? It's roots lie in house parties in the New York borough of the Bronx where excessive drinking, dancing

and the pleasures of sensual experience were encouraged and stimulated (like many such parties of many music genres).

The Bible calls this behaviour carnal, sensual, earthly, fleshly, worldly, and explains how it's damaging to a soul because it promises pleasure but only delivers a short-term 'high' and a long-term dissatisfaction and unhappiness. Why? Because you over indulge your senses and appetites and 'reset' their levels so you need ever more extreme experience.

DJ's at these parties wanting to encourage dancing would play the drum beats in between the verses of songs by people like James Brown in the breaks in the singing. These 'breakbeats' could be extended by mixing two records together if you had two turntables and 'break dancers' would perform. The 'masters of ceremonies' at these parties would make announcements about the next party etc and would do so during these break beats. Over time these MC's (since they were in the spotlight) would embellish things a bit. This turned into bragging, rhyming and putting down others, not to inform, but to entertain. They would 'battle' other MC's and this led to full rhymes over beats and people started to record and perform them. This is the birth of Hip-Hop music and culture and it would explode during the 1980s.

Legacy

It has arguably become one of the most successful genres of music of all time. The world loves it and all types of nationalities have adopted it for themselves. Sadly, even some naive Christians, have done so, who should know better. Why do I say that they should know better? because the Christian should be extremely suspicious of anything to 'world' loves with its inclination to, and love of, sin. Rap was born out of a sinful culture with an anti-Christian standard. Its form is to encourage pride, vanity, conflict, often violence, sensuality and misoginism and is often characterized as encouraging all forms of sin. Early on it wasn't played on mainstream radio because it was full of swearing. If you wanted to listen to it you'd have to seek out certain radio shows or recordings.

It turned from 'party music' to 'gangster rap' with it's LA gang associations. Now it exists in multiple forms. UK rap was never that successful but tried to copy America, because men are like sheep, and the music was seen as 'cool' and 'trendy'. But with 'grime' and 'drill' music, it has become more successful and influences thousands of young people today, especially in London.

The Bible and the Gospel

However, in the Bible in Amos 6.3- it condemns those who "put off the evil day and cause violence to come near... that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music... that drink wine in bowls.." but do not honour God. Some people defend 'gospel' or 'Christian rap' because they change the secular, corrupt lyrics to Christian words. But, as already indicated, the lyrics aren't the only thing that's wrong. It's more than about words, it's about culture and trends and associations and against Bible principles. It affects how you dress, how you speak, how you act and is associated with an extremely sinful culture. You can't just change the lyrics and hope "that's ok" any more than washing a child's potty and hoping it's ok to eat out of, or going into a coal mine in a white suit hoping to stay clean. This is what 'Christian rap' is expecting you to do. The style of music is inextricably linked to the sinful culture in our day and age. A culture of showing off, saying "look at me, aren't I great, isn't my rapping clever. See how good I am at it, at insulting

others. Look how much money I've got, see how many girls I can get, violent I can be. You should fear me, you should love me, worship me".

All this is the opposite of Christianity which teaches humility, not vanity and arrogance, and to hate carnal, fleshly behaviour and worldliness. The Bible says "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" 1 Peter 5.5 and to "worship God" Rev 19.10, 22.9. These 'gospel' rapper's can change the lyrics but are still wearing the same clothes, speaking and acting in the same way. There's a name for people who say one thing then act contrary- 'hypocrites'. At the very least the 'gospel' rap trumpet gives a very uncertain sound. This 'gospel' rap often looks and sounds exactly the same as secular rap and the MCs are just the same as the 'show offs' at those Bronx parties. Their gigs look the same, or worse; strobe lights and smoke etc, a complete sensory assault. It's designed to affect the feelings not the mind. Behind the scenes they can sometimes act in the same sinful way as in the secular world. I knew an old 'gospel' singer in America who would go on stage then go back to his dressing room and snort cocaine and he said it was common place!

What we do, what we wear, the culture we adopt, sends a message to people. It 'speaks' without speaking, 'gospel' rap says, "I love these things as much as you do but I'm trying to clean it up a bit on the outside". It's guilt by association, even though sometimes it's meant well. In Ezekiel 20 32 it says of Judah "we will be like the heathen...to serve wood and stone" in Jude 1.23 it says 'hating even the garment spotted (*made dirty*) by the flesh'. This is a second degree level of separation. Yes the corrupt flesh of rap and hip-hop is dirty don't go near it. Even non-Christians can see it's not morally good music. But the Christian version has been in contact with it and has been made unclean by association just like the garment in Jude. The Bible says hate it, do not love the world and the things that are in the world (John 2.15). Some say, "but shouldn't we use music to gain the lost?" But I ask you, how does encouraging worldliness gain the lost? Nowhere in the Bible does it give us an example of using music or performance to win the lost. Instead we are told to use the 'foolishness' of preaching. The apostle Paul did go to a theatre but did he put on a play or did he perform music? No, he preached! Were the apostles lacking creativity and innovation, or is their example one Christians should follow? The Bible says we should use Paul as our ensample (pattern).

'Gospel rap', what a contradiction! At the heart of the message of the Gospel is to turn from this sinful world, reject carnal pride, exhibitionism and sensual lusts and repent and come out of the world, not remain in it.

Come out of spiritual Egypt and Babylon with its sinful culture and into the promised land through Jesus Christ the only Man we should worship, the God-Man and Saviour of Mankind.