

church uses a choir then the majority of people are NOT teaching and admonishing the brethren around them. Yes, the hearers may be receiving teaching and admonition, but they are not fulfilling the command of the Lord. *Second, if a church uses a choir then the majority of people are NOT praising and thanking God.* Perhaps one may presume that God is being praised by the choir, but is the audience exempt from the Lord's command? The use of choirs in the church diminishes the importance of the instructions found in Colossians 3:16.

### Conclusion

Many people have an unfortunate misunderstanding of the true nature of worship. A number of people view worship as a thing to which they go. To these people, going to worship is not much different than going to a baseball game. This concept of worship has made religious people into passive observers rather than active worshipers. Jesus once said, **“An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth”** (John 4:23). What should be blatantly obvious to everyone who reads this verse is that the true worshiper first and foremost WORSHIPS God. One cannot be a true worshiper while idly occupying a pew or simply showing up. The use of choirs (as well as soloists, quartets, bands, etc.) only encourage this passive approach to worship.

Allowing a select group of individuals to perform music before the congregation of God's people encourages the “royal priesthood” of Christians to neglect their priestly duty. The use of a choir also encourages Christians to neglect the command to teach one another and praise God in song. Does the Bible authorize the use of choirs? Absolutely not. In fact, the clear commands found in Scripture imply that ALL Christians are to lift their voices together!



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THE OLSEN  
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OF CHRIST

# Faithful Sayings

October 12,  
2014

## Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM  
10:20 AM  
6:00 PM  
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

### Elders:

Pat Ledbetter  
Jeff Nunn  
Kyle Pope

### Deacons:

Eddie Cook  
Steve Dixon  
Jack Langley  
Neil Ledbetter  
Brady McAlister  
Walker McAnear  
Lance Purcell  
Rusty Scott

### Evangelists:

Kyle Pope  
Andrew Dow



## Does the Bible Authorize the Use of Choirs?

By Andrew Dow

A couple of weeks ago I preached a sermon entitled “A Scriptural Argument for A Cappella Music.” This lesson examined the scriptural teaching concerning musical worship under both covenants. After I presented the lesson I was asked if I would address the topic of choirs being used in the worship of God. In this article we will do just that.

When discussing musical worship with religious friends, it has been my experience that the conversations tend to focus on the question of instrumental music versus a cappella music. However, another valid question to ask is, “why do we not use choirs in our worship to God?” After all, choirs can sing without instrumental accompaniment and they could greatly improve the sound of our singing.

Remember, as in all other things we do, we must ask this question: *is it authorized in the revealed will of God?* That is the question we will seek to answer in this article. What does the Bible have to say? Do the Scriptures authorize the use of choirs in our worship to God?

## Choirs in the Old Testament

As we begin to see what God's word says concerning choirs, let's go back to the Old Testament. Choirs, along with musical instruments, were used in Israel's worship to God. When David first instructed instruments to be used before the ark of the covenant, he established a family of priests to offer thanks and praise to God through musical worship. We find that David **"appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel... with musical instruments.... Then on that day David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the Lord"** (1 Chronicles 16:4-7,

NASB). After Solomon built the Lord's temple we read, **"When the priests came forth from the holy place... all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthan, and their sons and kinsmen... were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and glorify the Lord..."** (2 Chronicles 5:11-14). I think it's easy to see that these **"Levitical singers"** are the same group of Levites that David first instructed to praise God in 1 Chronicles 16.

Another example can be found in the book of Nehemiah. When the children of Israel returned from captivity they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple of the Lord. The next step in the process was to restore their worship: **"Then I had the leaders of Judah come up on top of the wall, and I appointed two great choirs [companies that gave thanks, ASV], the first proceeding to the right.... The second choir [company of them that gave thanks, ASV] proceeded to the left"** (Nehemiah 12:31, 38).<sup>1</sup> We find in the text that **"the sons of Asaph, and his kinsmen"** were numbered among these two groups of people (Nehemiah 12:35-36). After the two groups were assembled to offer God thanks we read, **"And the singers**

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word translated "choir," (תִּזְבָּחַת, *tô-dāh*), is a noun simply referring to thanksgiving or praise (see Brown, Driver, and Briggs). Almost all modern translations have translated the word as "choirs" (NASB, cf. ESV, NKJV, NIV) while many of the older translations rendered the word as "companies that gave thanks" (ASV, cf. KJV, YLT). I think in this instance the older translations are more accurate. The idea of the text is not that two groups of people were appointed to sing, but rather that two groups of people were appointed simply to offer thanksgiving to God. The text will tell us in vs. 42 who it was that did the singing.

**sang"** (Nehemiah 12:42). Who were these singers? They were those of the priestly family who were appointed by David in 1 Chronicles 16.

What is the significance of noting these Old Testament passages? Note carefully who was instructed to sing. **"Asaph and his relatives"** (1 Chronicles 16:7), **"all the Levitical singers"** (2 Chronicles 5:12), **"the sons of Asaph and his kinsmen"** (Nehemiah 12:35-36). In all these circumstances, the choir (or the singers) was comprised only of Levites (or the priestly family). Why is this significant to our study? The New Testament describes all Christians as **"a chosen race, a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession"** (1 Peter 2:9, emphasis mine). Under the Old Covenant only priests formally sang before God. Under the New Covenant the priests are still the ones who are required to sing before God, but the priesthood has changed. Now all Christians share the priestly responsibilities, including the responsibility to worship God as **"the singers."** If we only have a select group of musicians singing, then many of the royal priests are neglecting their responsibility.

### The Purpose of Musical Worship

It may also be of value to consider what Scripture teaches is the purpose of our musical worship. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:16, **"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with**

**psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."** In this verse we find a two-fold purpose for our musical worship. *First, we sing to one another.* By singing to one another we teach and admonish those around us. This is an important aspect of our singing that we must not overlook. *Second, we sing to God.* This is done in order to offer God thanksgiving and praise. You might note that this sounds very similar to the thanksgiving offered in the Old Testament texts above.

I'd like you to consider this verse in light of our study concerning the use of choirs in the church. I think there are a couple of problems that arise when we allow a select group of individuals to perform songs before a congregation. *First, if a*