



## ARE CHURCH CHOIRS AND SOLOS SCRIPTURAL?

Larry Powers

Many are using choirs and solos in their attempts to worship God. Are choirs and solos authorized by God as a part of Christian worship? To find the answer to this question, we must turn to the Bible. The Bible is God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16,17; John 12:48; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3). Man does not have the right to add to, nor to take away from, the teachings of the Word of God (Revelation 22:18,19; Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6). The New Testament portion of God's Word is the standard of authority for what we do in the work and worship of God today (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:6-13).

In His Word, God has authorized five acts of worship for His church. These five acts are: **singing** (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), **giving** (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:6,7), **prayer** (1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:8), **eating the Lord's supper** (1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Acts 20:7), and the **preaching of the Word of God** (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 2 Timothy 4:1-4). These acts of worship are authorized by direct statements, commands, implications, and approved examples.

Singing in worship is commanded by God. The New Testament contains many examples of Christians singing in worship to God (Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:18,19; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13). These passages describe the kind of music God has authorized so that His people can worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The kind of music God authorized is singing. This singing is congregational singing. **It is done by every Christian in the assembly!** It must be done with understanding. The purpose of the singing is for Christians to glorify God and to teach and admonish one another.

### Does the New Testament Teach Congregational Singing?

Does Ephesians 5:19 teach congregational singing? The word in the original Greek language in which the New Testament was written, which is translated as

"speaking," means "to utter speech, to convey speech, to use the tongue or faculty of speech, to utter articulate sounds, to talk, to tell, to use words to declare one's mind and thoughts." The New Testament word translated "yourselves" is a "reflexive" pronoun of the third person. It shows that the person who acts and the person who receives the action is the same. In other words, while one is speaking to others in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, others are also speaking to him in the same way. This is a clear reference to congregational singing where all mutually teach one another as they unite their voices in song. To obey this command, there must be an interchange of action. When one group or person is active ( a choir or soloist) and another group is passive (the listening audience), there is no interchange of action. **Ephesians 5:19 can not be obeyed by choirs or solos!**

Does Colossians 3:16 teach congregational singing? The New Testament word, which is translated "teaching," means "to teach, instruct, by word of mouth." It requires that the one who is taught understand the teaching given. The New Testament word translated "admonishing" means "to put into the mind, instruct, warn." This teaching and admonishing is to be done to "one another." The phrase "one another" is translated from the same New Testament word as "yourselves" in Ephesians 5:19. Therefore, when the church is worshipping God by the act of singing, there is teaching and admonishing one another taking place. Colossians 3:16 clearly teaches congregational singing! When one group or individual (the choir or soloist) is active, and another group is passive (the listening audience), there is no interchange of teaching and admonishing!

Congregational singing (singing by every member of the congregation) was the practice of the church in the first century. But many today claim that choirs and solos in the worship are permitted because the Bible is silent concerning them. When God commanded Christians to sing and admonish one another, that eliminated choirs and solos in worship. It was not necessary for God to give a long list of "Thou shalt nots" concerning singing. It was not necessary for God to say, "Thou shalt not use mechanical instruments of music in My worship." It was not necessary for God to say, "Thou shalt not use choirs or solos in my worship." **When God specified congregational singing, that eliminated choirs, solos, and instrumental music.**

Choirs, solos and mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship were never commanded by the Lord! No apostle of Christ ever approved of choirs, solos or instrumental music in the worship to God! No inspired New Testament writer ever taught or approved of them. There is no command, implication or approved example of the use of choirs, solos or instrumental music in New Testament worship. Thus, they are completely without the authority of the Lord! **To use them in worship is sinful** (Matthew 15:8,9-12 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18, 19).

## **Must Worship Be Entertaining?**

Must worship be entertaining? Many seem to think so. Every Christian must realize that God has commanded him to worship in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). This means that every Christian must worship with the correct attitude and the correct actions. God is the One Who is being worshipped. He is the audience. Therefore, He is the One Who must be pleased!

### **1 Corinthians 14:26**

Some try to defend the use of choirs and solos by saying that 1 Corinthians 14:26 teaches such. A close look at the verse will reveal that it does not teach the use of either choirs or solos. To say that "**every one of you hath a psalm**" does not mean that every one sang a solo or that several sang solos. A psalm can be read, or quoted. In this context, Paul is dealing with the misuse of a spiritual gift. The best explanation of what the verse means is Acts 4:23-30. When the disciples heard what had happened to Peter and John, "**they lifted up their voice to God with one accord...**" (Acts 4:24).

### **Church History**

Lyman Coleman, a church historian, wrote: "The prevailing mode of singing during the first three centuries was congregational. The whole congregation united their voices in the sacred song of praise, in strains suited to their ability .... the most ancient and most common mode of singing was confessedly for the whole assembly; men, women and children blend their voices in their songs of praise in the great congregation" (Ancient Christianity Exemplified, pages 329, 330).

All worship, at all times, and in all places must be done in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). If one does not worship in the right acts and with the right attitudes, his worship is vain and he is guilty of sin. **There is absolutely no authority in the New Testament for the use of choirs and solos in worship. Therefore, those who practice such are worshipping in vain and are guilty of sin.**