

“After Long and Prayerful Study...”

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Churches that are following the “Change Movement” in the churches of Christ, having moved away from the solid moorings of God’s revealed will, often preface their declarations concerning change by saying, “After long and prayerful study we have decided to add instrumental music to one of our services,” or “we have decided to serve the Lord’s Supper on Saturday,” or “we have decided to allow women to take a more active leadership role in worship.” My question is: what did they study and for what did they pray? Did they find the basis for these changes in Scripture or in the religious culture and the mega-churches of the “community church” movement? Did they pray for wisdom to understand and apply God’s Word as he gave it or did they come to the Scripture in our effort to find approval for their pre-conceived agendas? Let’s take one of the issues mentioned above: instrumental music in worship. To go to the Old Testament to find authority for introducing instrumental music in worship would be like going to the Old Testament to find approval for a physical temple in Jerusalem, animal sacrifices, the burning of incense, and a special priesthood after the order of Aaron. Who believes these things are legitimate additions to the work and worship of the church? To go to the Book of Revelation to find approval for instruments and conclude that the instruments in heaven give authority for instruments in the church is to assume that the harps are literal (incidentally, if the incense mentioned in Revelation 5:8 symbolizes “the prayers of the saints,” why do the harps not symbolize the worship of the saints?) and that bands, organs and pianos may be substituted for harps (after all, the Bible says “harps”). Also, in Revelation 5:8; 14:2; 15:2 each worshipper

had an instrument, so why would each worshipper not be required to have an instrument in church if Revelation is the authority for having them? The fact is that in the worship of the New Testament church the word of God says, “sing” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Some would argue that these two passages have nothing to do with the worship of the church, but if this is true, what passage authorize us to have singing in worship? If Hebrews 2:12 is cited, the word is still “sing.” And the instrument is stipulated in the Ephesian and Colossian passages: “the heart.” So, if “after long and prayerful study” the leaders of congregations decide to introduce instruments of music into the worship of the church, what did they study and for what did they pray? The fact is that the New Testament authorizes the church to sing in worship and church history correctly declares that the first century church did just that.