

**"THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES"  
OR  
"THE LAW OF EXCLUSION"**

INTRODUCTION:

1. This is a very important lesson because most religious people labor under the false impression that a thing in religion is not wrong if the Lord has not specifically said, in so many words, that it is wrong.

- A. Martin Luther argued that the silence of the scriptures was always permissive.
- B. Ulrich Zwingli, a contemporary of Luther, argued that the silence of the scriptures was always prohibitive.
  - a. He believed that unless the scriptures authorized an action, such an action was unacceptable to God.
- C. The majority of religious people hold to Martin Luther's position.

2. When one questions many practices in religion, the reply often comes: "BUT WHERE DID GOD SAY NOT TO DO IT?"

- A. These people believe that the silence of the scriptures gives them permission to practice about anything they want to in religion; if the word of God does not expressly condemn it, it must be alright.
- B. If this notion were true, the silence of the word of God would be as much a guide for men as the positive affirmation of the Word.
- C. If this were true, there would be no end to the foolishness men could engage in as religious activities and still be pleasing before God.
- D. But, when God commands man to do a thing specifically, that excludes everything else in the related category.
  - a. When Christ authorized unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine as elements of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26: 26 - 29; Ex. 12:8):
    - i. That excludes everything else.
    - ii. It would be sinful to add meat and potatoes to the Lord's table (orange juice, water, etc.).
  - b. When God commanded the children of Israel to use a lamb "without blemish", a "male of the first year", taken "from the sheep or from the goats" in the Passover Feast (Ex. 12:5):

- i. This excluded a male lamb with blemish.
  - ii. This excluded a female lamb.
  - iii. This excluded a two-year-old male lamb.
  - iv. This excluded a male calf of a year old (or a chicken).
- c. When the Bible teaches that we are to baptize in water, that excluded every other kind of liquid (Acts 8: 36 -39; I Pet. 3:20 - 21; Eph. 5:26).
  - d. Noah was to build the Ark of Gopher wood. Gen. 6:14

## I. PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE THAT SHOW THE PROHIBITIVE NATURE OF THE SILENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

1. Deut. 4:2
2. Deut. 12: 32
3. Josh. 1:7
4. Prov. 4:26 - 27; Deut. 5:32; Lev. 18:5
5. I Cor. 4:6 *"Not to go beyond the things which are written" ASV*
6. II John 9 - 11
7. I Pet. 4:11
8. Rev. 22: 18 - 19; Prov. 30:6
9. Gal. 3:15 (Ps. 89: 34 *"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" KJV*)
10. Gal. 1: 6 - 9
11. Matt. 7: 21 - 23
12. Matt. 18:18
13. The silence of the word of God is as binding as what it does say.

## II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE THAT SILENCE PROHIBITS

1. Nadab and Abihu used fire in their censors that the Lord "*commanded them not*" Lev. 10:1.
  - A. Fire went out from the Lord, and "*devoured them, and they died before the Lord*". Lev. 10:2
  - B. God had specified the fire to be used: "*coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord*" Lev. 16:12.
  - C. They presumed upon the silence of the scriptures. Psa. 19:13 "*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;*".
  
2. Moses presumed upon the silence of the scriptures:
  - A. God told Moses to "*take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together*"..."*and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water.*" Num. 20:8
  - B. Moses took the rod and gathered the congregation together before the rock. Num. 20: 9 -10
  - C. Instead of speaking to the rock as God told him, he took the rod and smote the rock twice. Num. 20:11
  - D. Because of his presumption, God did not allow him to bring Israel into the Promised Land. Num. 20:12

### III. MAN CAN ONLY KNOW WHAT PLEASURES GOD BY GOD'S REVELATION, NOT BY HIS SILENCE!

1. All we know about the will of God is that which God has revealed. I Cor. 2: 9 - 13; Deut. 29:29; Eph. 3: 1 - 5
  - A. We know the WORSHIP that pleases God -- the worship He has revealed.
    - a. John 4:24
    - b. Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19
      - i. Teaching-- Acts 20:7
      - ii. Giving--I Cor. 16:2
      - iii. Lord's Supper -- Acts 20:7
      - iv. Prayer -- Acts 2:42
      - v. Singing -- Col. 3:16

- B. We know the CHURCH that pleases Him -- the one He planned and that Jesus built. Eph. 3:10; Matt. 16:18
- C. We know the CHURCH GOVERNMENT that pleases Him. Acts 14: 23
- D. We know the WORK God wants the church to do:
  - a. Preach to the lost. Mk. 16: 15 - 16
  - b. Edify the members. Eph. 4:11 - 12; Matt. 28:20
  - c. Help needy saints. I Cor. 16: 1 - 2
  - d. The Social is NOT part of the work of the church.
- E. We know HOW HE WANTS CHRISTIANS TO LIVE. Tit. 2:11 - 12; James 1:27

#### IV. LET US LOOK AT SOME MODERN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES THAT ARE PROHIBITED BY THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES:

##### 1. Burning of incense in worship.

- A. The New Testament is silent on it, and this silence does not give liberty to practice it.

##### 2. Sprinkling and pouring for baptism (Noun -- *Baptisma*; Verb -- *Baptizo*)

- A. The word "baptism" means immersion or burial. Rom. 6: 3 - 4; Acts 8: 38 - 39

- B. The New Testament is silent on sprinkling and pouring, and this silence does not give us liberty to practice it.

##### 3. Church-sponsored recreation is prohibited by the silence of the scriptures.

- A. The local church is to:

- a. Preach to the lost -- I Tim. 3:15
- b. Edify the members -- Matt. 28:20
- c. Help needy saints -- I Cor. 16: 1 -2

- B. The church cannot have a ball team because the scriptures are silent on ball teams!

##### 4. "Brotherhood elderships" and the "sponsoring church" are prohibited by the silence of the scriptures.

A. I Pet. 5:2

B. Acts 20:28

5. The playing of musical instruments is excluded by the silence of the scripture.

A. God said "sing". Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16

6. Chorus and choir singing in the worship of the church is excluded by the silence of the scriptures.

A. All Christians are to sing in worship to God. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16

B. This excludes choir-singing.

V. EXAMPLES OF UNSCRIPTURAL PRACTICES THAT HAVE DIVIDED THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF THE ATTITUDE THAT THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES DOES NOT FORBID, BUT GIVES LICENSE TO PRACTICE WHAT IS NOT SPECIFICALLY FORBIDDEN.

1. This attitude was involved in the division of the 19th century -- the Christian church and Disciples of Christ.

A. It was upon this attitude toward the scriptures that the Missionary Society and instrumental music was accepted.

B. It was this same attitude that caused them to bring in choirs, socials, women preachers, and women elders.

2. This attitude is involved in the division of churches of Christ in the 20th century.

A. Many churches of Christ in this century accepted the attitude of the Christian church of the last century.

B. The cry went forth, "*We do many things for which we have no Bible authority*".

C. They had no New Testament authority for their benevolent societies, sponsoring churches, church-sponsored recreation, brotherhood-wide projects.

D. They have tried to justify all these things by the silence of the scriptures.

3. A study of this lesson will show you that the silence of the scriptures authorize nothing!

4. Where the Bible is silent, we must be silent. We must have authority from Christ before we can teach or practice anything without sinning. Matt. 28: 18; Eph. 1: 22 -23; Matt. 7: 21 - 22

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us all learn this lesson well -- WHEN GOD SAYS NOTHING, WE MUST NOT ACT!
2. The silence of the scriptures must be respected. Rev. 22: 18 - 19; II John 9

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