

THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES
(WHAT GOD DIDN'T SAY)
by David F. Sims

In Genesis 4:3-5, Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord. God was pleased with Abel's but had no regard for Cain's. Perhaps God did not say not to offer the fruit of the ground, but His silence did not permit it, and He was therefore displeased.

In Genesis 6:14, God didn't tell Noah not to use cedar, pine, oak, or any other kind of wood to build the ark. Could Noah had used anything other than the gopher wood that God specified? No...God's specification of what He did want excluded everything else automatically. Noah had no right to use other woods just because God didn't say not to.

In Genesis 11:1-9, God didn't say not to assemble together to build a tower to heaven. But God's silence on the matter didn't authorize it. Therefore God scattered the people and confused their languages.

In Exodus 12:22-23, God didn't say not to go out the window of the house. He only said not to go out the door. Do you think God would have spared the lives of Israelites who had left their houses through a window?

In Leviticus 10:1-3, Nadab & Abihu, the priests and sons of Aaron, "offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them." God struck them dead with the fire. Aaron protested; perhaps he claimed that God not said not to offer strange fire. Moses calmed Him down and reminded him that God must be treated as Holy.

In Numbers 20:7-13, God told Moses to "speak to the rock...that it may yield its water." Moses struck the rock twice with his rod. God was displeased, and punished Moses by forbidding him to lead Israel into the Promised Land. Did Moses say, "You didn't say not to strike the rock"?

In 1 Samuel 15, God commanded King Saul to "utterly destroy" the Amalekites, including men, women, children, infants, and animals. Verse 9 says that Saul spared the king and the best of the animals. In verse 21 Saul attempted to justify his act by saying they were brought back to offer as sacrifices to God. The prophet Samuel rebuked him, saying that obedience is better than sacrifices, and that what he did was rebellious and insubordinate. Did Saul say "God didn't say not to offer them as sacrifices"? God rejected Saul as king for his disobedience.

From these and many more Old Testament examples, we learn that God does not have to specify everything He does not want us to do. He frequently only specifies exactly what He does want.

Suppose you, as a parent, give your teenage child a \$50 bill, and instruct him to go to the grocery store and purchase milk, bread, and eggs. Your child goes to the grocery store, purchases the milk, bread, and eggs, and also purchases a soda and a candy bar for himself. He also picks up some ice cream and a bag of cookies. After

leaving the grocery store, he takes the rest of the money and rents a couple of videos, plays some arcade games, and then treats himself to Subway, followed by Dairy Queen for dessert. Finally he returns home and hands you \$1.50 in change. Of course you are going to be upset. He just wasted your \$50 bill! All he says is, "You didn't say not to." What do you do then? God's response is punishment. God's silence doesn't authorize you to do something. He didn't have to list every type of sacrifice that was unacceptable for Cain & Able; He didn't have to list every type of wood Noah was not allowed to use. He didn't have to specify that the people were not to build a tower to heaven. He didn't have to mention every way of exiting a house for the Israelites to get the point. He did not list every type of fire that Nadab & Abihu were not to use. He didn't need to tell Moses everything not to do to the rock to get water. God didn't have to tell Saul everything not to do regarding the Amalekites. And you didn't have to tell your teenage child everything not to buy at the grocery store and everything else he was not supposed to do with the money. SILENCE DOES NOT EQUAL PERMISSION!!!

Let's look now at some New Testament examples:

In Matthew 1:21, the angel told Mary to name the child Jesus. He didn't list every name not to name Him.

In Matthew 15, Jesus specifically condemns the Pharisees and scribes who transgressed the law for their tradition. He accused them of giving their money to God, rather than helping their own parents. This was a dishonor to the parents, and thus a dishonor to God. Well...God didn't say not to give all their money to Him, did He? Jesus said their worship was vain.

In Matthew 21, the Jews were buying and selling in the Temple. God didn't say not to use the Temple as a place of business. Were they sinning? Jesus thought so. He chased them out.

In Matthew 26:26-28, Jesus used unleavened bread and fruit of the vine to institute the Lord's Supper. We know He used unleavened bread because it was the time of the Passover, during which no leaven was allowed in the house (Exodus 12:14-20; Leviticus 23:5-6). Other than in the 4 Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), there is no mention anywhere of the church using anything different, even though it doesn't say not to use something different. So could we today substitute regular bread for unleavened bread, or maybe even a cookie? Could we use kool-aid or water or something else in place of the fruit of the vine? If not, why not? God didn't say not to use something different. And He didn't need to.

Ephesians 5:19 commands us to sing. Colossians 3:16 commands us to sing. Hebrews 13:15 commands us to praise God with our lips. In none of these verses, nor any where else in the New Testament does God command us to use instruments with our singing. Since God specified singing, that automatically excludes the use of instruments. We cannot add the use of instruments to God's Word. Why not? God's silence forbids it...He didn't have to say not to.

Benevolence / Institutionalism

Now study your Scriptures thoroughly and find even ONE verse that shows that any church sent money to help non-saints. Find even ONE verse that shows the existence of a missionary society. Find even ONE verse that says the church built orphanages or retirement homes or supported colleges or any other kind of institution. Find even ONE verse that allows the elders of one congregation to exercise oversight over another congregation or its funds. Can you find one? Even ONE? There is none that I know of. There is no verse that authorizes the church to perform any of those practices. (There are plenty that obligate the INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN to help the needy, but none for the church.) So can the church today do such things? (God didn't say not to.)

The denominations today try to justify their actions by relying on the silence of the Scriptures; they bind where God has not bound and loose where God has not loosed (Matthew 16:19). They have added to, changed, and taken away from the Word of God (Revelation 22:18-19). They claim to do it all in the name of the Lord. But Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord,' did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:21-23). On the day of Judgement, many of today's denominational members are going to say, "Lord, Lord, did we not build orphanages and retirement homes in Your name, and in Your name use instruments with our singing, and in Your name set up missionary societies to do the work of the church?" Jesus' reply will be condemnation.

And there will be no "You didn't say not to."